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MOTION PICTURE DIRECTING

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MOTION PICTURE DIRECTING

THE FACTS AND THEORIES OF THE NEWEST ART

By PETER MILNE

Motion Picture critic for over six years on Motion Picture News, Picture Play Magazine and Wid's (Film) Daily; and member scenario and production department of Famous Players-Lasky Corporation.

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PREFACE

The observations on the art of directing motion pictures included in this book are not by any means intended as lessons for the layman with ambitions pointing him toward this goal. To teach the craft through the printed page is as impossible of accomplishment as instructing a steeple-jack in his trade through correspondence school. "A director must be born, not made." This old adage, adapted to our present situation, is of a necessity partially false, inasmuch as at the time of the present day directors' initial birthdays there was no such thing as motion picture production. Still it is true in a sense. Because to direct for the screen requires a personality and an ability, blending so many elements of generalship and technique that to studiously require them is next to an impossibility.

Be that as it may, the motion picture of today is developing its own directors. It has reached out to all businesses and arts and drafted men who are now headed for top positions in the ranks of directorial artists. Besides it offers the most humble of the studio staff the opportunity to rise to the top.

During recent years cameramen, property men, authors, continuity writers, artists of brush and of pen and ink, actors and business men from varying lines have become identified with the art of motion picture directing. The law of averages has declared that many of these should fall short of success. Many have.

But others have succeeded, have succeeded even beyond the expectations of their sponsors. Therefore it may safely be said that the gates to the field of motion picture directing are ready to open to all-comers, provided that the aspirants have the inborn abilities and personal makeup that are rigidly required.

These abilities, essential qualities and characteristics signed who has spent nearly ten years in the motion are dealt with in the following chapters by the under- picture industry, serving in the capacities of critic and continuity writer.

These abilities, essential qualities and characteristics are, therefore, set down here as first hand observations. But they are never intended as lessons that will produce immediate results in the way of lucrative positions. No reader of this volume can go dashing home to his eager wife with that much advertised greeting: "Dear! I've got that job! The New York Institute's book on directing produced 100 per cent results!"

It is hoped, however, that it will give those who have the patience to peruse it something of an insight into the tremendous responsibilities that rest on the shoulders of the conscientious director. At present most people seem to believe that that line on the screen: "Directed by ———" just stands for a lucky fellow having a grand and glorious fling within the walls of a motion picture studio.

PETER MILNE.

With grateful thanks and appreciation for the views expressed therein by Marshall Neilan, William C. De Mille, Rex Ingram, Cecil B. De Mille, Frank Borzage, Edward Dillon, Ernst Lubitsch; and the representatives of D. W. Griffith, Thomas H. Ince, and other artists herein referred to, whose co-operation has made this book possible.

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT AND THE LESS GREAT

EMOTIONAL experience and the capacity for enduring and retaining mental pictures of such experiences—these constitute the chief asset that distinguishes the master director from the rank and file. Practical explanations and a word of warning

CHAPTER I

What is the fundamental asset that makes the great motion picture director? The requisite that distinguishes the real artist from the rank and file? It is really the same asset that distinguishes the great artist in any walk of art from the less great.

When you put this question to a selected group of directors you are liable to receive a different answer from each one. In fact several were approached on the subject before this chapter was written. And very few of them agreed with one another. A still smaller number hit upon what seems the correct answer to the question.

It is quite true that the ability to "feel" a story and each one of its individual scenes, counts a lot in a director's favor. The proper "atmosphere," the director's ability to achieve it, is vastly important. So also it is important to have the ability to properly "visualize" the continuous action of a picture even before the cameraman has once turned his crank.

But after all has been said and done on these scores it remains that the one determining factor that distinguishes the great from the near-great in the picture producing art is experience.

Other requirements are important, vastly so, but first of all and in capital letters EXPERIENCE.

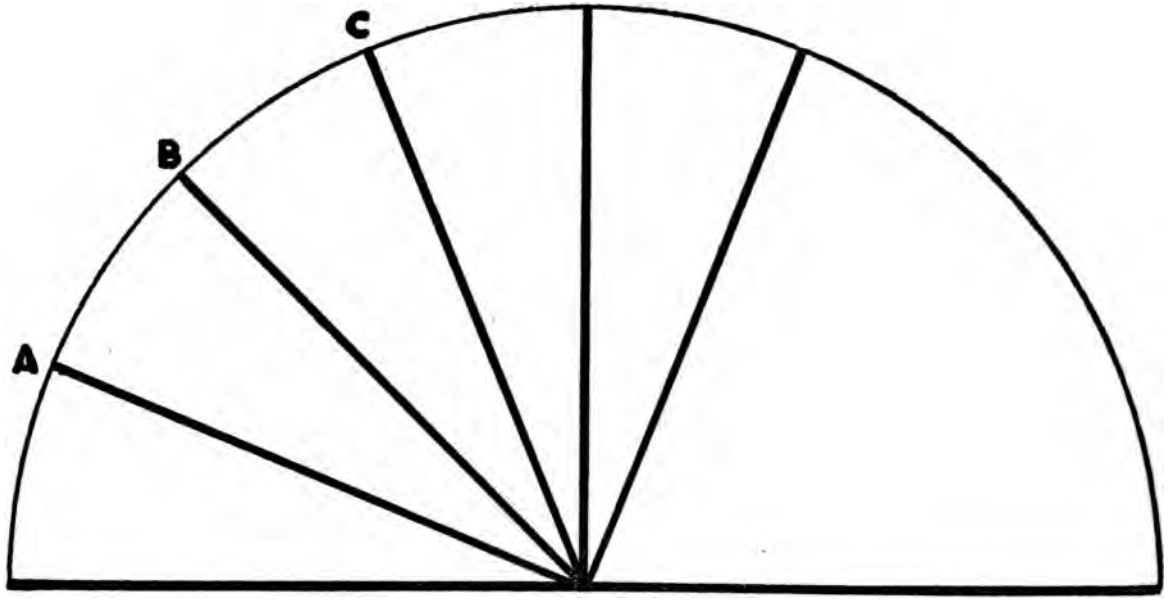
It is fondly hoped that no one will presume to take this literally to the very capital letter. To produce a realistic crook story a director must not, of necessity,

turn Raffles for a night. Nor to portray the effects of African "yaka water" on a white man, must he subject himself to a long seige of the drug itself. And doubtless a capable director can successfully picturize the life of a pearl fisher without diving into the briny deep.

Such specific experiences are not within the span of any one man's life. A director might know Africa thoroughly, might know what "yaka water" was as well as a "madiera chair" and then be handed a manuscript containing such nautical terms as "chain box," "capsan," "seacock" and "chain cable." As a consequence a director must always hold himself in readiness for research work when a 'script containing such foreign terms comes his way.

But these experiences are largely physical experiences. And they are very minor when it comes to a summing up. No matter what peculiar terms and words are used in a story, it is the emotional content of it that counts as of greatest importance. Therefore the director with the most complete groundwork of emotional experience is the man most properly equipped to rise above his fellows. This groundwork of experience takes the shape of an emotional arc, an arc that includes on its line points representing each human emotion of life, reduced to specific and commonplace fundamentals. The more points of emotion upon the director's arc, the better craftsman he is.

Diagrams properly don't belong in books written upon an art such as directing. They should be confined to volumes on mathematics and astronomy, but a simple



A—SUFFERING. B—SACRIFICE. C—LOVE.

one introduced here will assist in illustrating the above point clearly.

Now let the arc pictured illustrate the entire span of emotional experience possible for a certain man, our great director, to have undergone. Say that the line and point A represent the emotion of suffering.

Our director has suffered in his early career. Perhaps he has slept on a park bench on a cold night with newspapers stuffed among his thin clothes to guard against the wind. His sleep has been fitful and in his moments of awakening he has thought the whole world against him—and roundly cursed it. In the morning he has risen with his bones aching and not even the two cents in his trousers necessary for the purchase of a cup of boiled muddy water called coffee down the line at Ben's Busy Bee.

This is a not uncommon case of suffering, specially in the world of make-believe, where genius is raised from poverty to affluence sometimes within the short space of a single day.

But while it is being experienced it is doubtless one of the most terrible adventures ever visited upon a human being. As a consequence in later years this experience of acute suffering remains stamped, consciously or subconsciously, on the individual's mind.

Now to the point where this experience will tell when the individual has become a director. The director is called upon to stage, we will say, the scene of Napoleon, a prisoner of the European powers on the island of St. Helena.

How can the director know how Napoleon felt?

REX INGRAM, DRILLING SOME OF THE VARIOUS "TYPES" OF "THE FOUR HORSEMEN" IN THEIR PARTS

GEORGE FITZMAURICE TRANSFERRED "PETER IBBETSON" TO THE SCREEN RETAINING ALL ITS RARE CHARM

What does he know about his attitude of mind? The answers are he knows everything. Back in the photographic gallery of his mind he reaches for that scene of himself on the park bench. He recalls that that was the night during which he suffered, in his own mind, even to the extent that Napoleon had suffered.

Therefore, still in his mind's eye, our director refers to his arc of emotional experience. The point A represents the height of his suffering. He then merely extends the line A out and beyond his own emotional arc until it crosses the emotional arc of Napoleon at the point where he suffered the tortures of defeat, disillusionment and imprisonment.

On the other hand perhaps the scene of suffering that our director will be called upon to reproduce on the screen is one less important or vivid than his own. It might be a scene of a little boy stammering out his first lesson in school. Suffering, to be sure, but not of such great magnitude. In this case the line A is merely extended downward until the little boy's emotional arc is reached.

To reduce such a process of the intellect is indeed dangerous. An individual's emotional experience is no matter of diagrammatical science. However this science is purely imaginary. The whole process is carried out in the director's brain. It is only the fact that it is here reduced to cold type that makes it seem rather brutal.

Perhaps certain directors will scoff at the idea but to those it may be replied that they use such a process of reasoning whether they know it or not. The whole

working out of the scheme is mechanical and subconscious to a certain extent.

Perhaps, too, there are those among the directors who believe that their moments of supreme suffering, park bench or otherwise, were far greater than Napoleon's sufferings. Nevertheless their own arcs of emotional experience still serve their good steads. Such a director merely reverses the process and goes *down* the line A until he reaches what he believes the arc of Napoleon, instead of going *up* the line. Such conceit on the part of the director does not, however, lead to the best results.

By the same process the director is able to live in his mind the greatest case of self-sacrifice that the world has ever known, provided that at one time in his career he has made a self-sacrifice that loomed of tremendous proportions at the time. His line of sacrifice, B, is followed to the point where it cuts the arc containing the greatest sacrificial act of the world. And of course on the line, B, as on all the other lines from all the other points innumerable other arcs cut across representing cases of emotion between the greatest and the humblest.

And so by his own experience, no matter how small or how large it is in comparison to the experience he is to picturize, the director is able to give a realistic and sensitive representation of it on the motion picture screen.

The case holds the same with all the other emotions of life. Perhaps with the case of love it is a bit different. For in the matter of other emotions the director may grant that someone else has experienced them in great-

er degree than he. But with the matter of his own romance or romances—no! All directors have no hesitancy in claiming, only to themselves of course, that theirs is the greatest in the world. Consequently there is no line C, but just the point. It is stationary. The director follows it neither up nor down to reach out for some similar point on another arc. Thus it is that romantic scenes are quite the most frequently done realistically and properly of all the emotional scenes contrived for the screen. This time the director's conceit does not stand in his way.

For the rest the great director's arc of emotional experience contains every emotion, every cross and mixture of emotions, that he has lived through during his life. His arc contains hundreds of lines, each one distinguished from the other by less than a hair's breadth. And yet, when he comes to employ the arc in his work, the exact line he desires immediately stands out in bold relief from the others and the director sets to work upon it.

Thus the greatest directors of today are the men who have run the greatest gamut of emotional experience. To converse with D. W. Griffith is to instantly realize that here is a man who has suffered, sacrificed, lost, loved, triumphed. His brain is a storehouse of emotional experience, his own particular arc contains so many points upon it that a dozen times a dozen alphabets would not suffice to represent them all.

Thomas H. Ince has confessed to tramping Broadway searching for work. Chance led him to the old Biograph studio. Today he is among the greatest

producers in the art. And it is a safe wager that his beginnings and struggles have not been obliterated from his mind by his success—rather they have been responsible for it.

Charles Chaplin, greatest comedian in the world and his own director gives evidence in each of his pictures, mute, grand evidence of the sufferings, the sacrifices, the little joys and triumphs of the days of his youth when he had nothing.

And so does every great director today show in his pictures, whether he knows it or not, the experiences in his emotional career.

And let it be said also that the less great display a remarkable lack of experience.

It must be reiterated here that these chapters are not to be taken in the light of a text book. The writer would have a holy horror of having on his mind a happily married family man, who tossed up his business and his bank account to sleep on a park bench, and who tossed up his wife and children to enter upon one illicit love affair after another, just to complete his arc of emotional experience, because it has been stated here that the fullest arc produces the best results.

Such experiences must come naturally. The great director is a born artist. The born artist is a natural vagabond and nine-hundred and ninety-nine people of a thousand are not natural vagabonds.

After this fundamental requisite of experience come a dozen other assets that go to make the good director—the great director. The ability to handle people, to be a master of men, the knack of "visualization," to

inject those little touches into a scene that perform the miraculous act of "getting under the skin," to achieve a proper and telling "atmosphere," etc., etc. These requisites will be dealt with in other chapters, sometimes by the directors themselves.

But no matter how important these other essentials loom it may be stated again that first of all EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE counts.

CHAPTER II

THE PICTURE SENSE

EVERY director who consistently derives a living from picture making has in more or less degree the power of visualization.—Without it he would be unfit for his position.—The conclusion that this "power" is mere common sense applied to picture directing

Chapter II

All our directors are not great. There would be no fun for the picture audiences if they were. Fans would be deprived of that greatest of all pleasures; writing to the magazines to point out that Marie wore silk stockings going in the door and lace filigreed hose coming out of it. But in the rank and file of directors whose work appears with regularity on the screen there are many capable and skilled men—each one, perhaps, merely waiting the chance or opportunity to step into the limelight with a pictorial masterpiece.

Most of these directors are noted as "specialty men." One can do comedy-drama well, another excels at straight romance, a third has a particular turn for handling the intricacies of farce. These men are skilled artists but not great artists. Potentially great, perhaps, but the full extent of their emotional arcs has not as yet been tested.

What then, a student of the screen has a perfect right to ask, determines the ability of these men? The answer is, that uncanny sixth sense necessary to become a director, "picture sense" or more technically, the power of visualization.

The picture sense is latent in every embryo director. It can be developed, but no amount of study will acquire it. It seems to be born in some men just as a perfect tenor voice is born in some men. Study brings each out but cannot create either one.

The "picture sense" is the art of seeing in the mind's

eye, or rather the mind's picture screen, every scene of the scenario writer's typewritten manuscript. Readers will probably recall that this accomplishment has also been set down as the scenario writer's fundamental groundwork of learning. Thus the writer and the director have much in common. And this is one reason why so many scenario writers have become successful directors.

It may readily be seen that this picture sense, this ability of visualization, is constantly being used by the director. When he first reads his script he is visualizing it every moment of the way. To himself he says, "Scene one will look like this, scene two will follow like this." He then conjures up before his eye what sort of a set he will work in, what properties it possesses, how his people will dress, where they will stand when they go through their emotions, how they will enter and exit from the scene, and a hundred and one other details.

If, during this process of visualization, the story or one of its various scenes rings false, then the director is prepared to talk it over with the scenario writer and see what can be done to set it right.

So right here it may be divined that a director with this sense of visualization developed to the utmost is a most valuable asset to any producing company. If, on the contrary, he has to wait until he sees a scene actually screened before he can detect its flaws and, seeing them, prepare to take it all over again, the waste time runs into money lost.

Thus a director with a proper sense of visualization

IN "SENTIMENTAL TOMMY," DIRECTOR JOHN S. ROBERTSON SUCCEEDED IN RETAINING THE CHARM OF SIR JAMES M. BARRIE'S ORIGINAL WORK

"THE THREE MUSKETEERS" REPRESENTS DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS AT HIS BEST AND MUCH OF THE CREDIT BELONGS TO FRED NIBLO, DIRECTOR

is not prepared to "shoot" until he has determined that each scene will screen realistically to the best of his knowledge.

All this may sound perfectly easy to those unacquainted with the inside of a motion picture studio. It might be surmised that to detect unrealities in a manuscript is merely a matter of common sense.

But it is remarkable indeed to take notice of the many men, true artists in their particular lines and certainly possessed of a modicum of common sense, who have experimented in the directorial field and who have failed because of this lack of picture sense, lack of the ability to visualize.

One of the larger producing companies in the field today, which is constantly seeking new directorial talent, a company that is actually willing to pay intelligent men to learn the craft of directing, recently induced an author of national reputation to join its scenario department with a view of later becoming a director after he had become fully acquainted with the construction of manuscripts.

This man never had a chance at directing because he never made good in the scenario department. He didn't, couldn't visualize. And as said "picture sense" is required every bit as much by the scenario writer as it is by the director.

Whereas, this highly talented individual failed in mastering the picture craft, another man, a man who had never written a line in his life, was given a megaphone and told to go out and "shoot" a picture. This man was a cameraman, had worked on a hundred

pictures and, having the power to visualize, had developed it to a remarkable degree. The results he achieved with his first picture have earned him a position with the producing company as long as he wants it.

The difference between these two "rookies" was just that difference of "picture sense." On the one hand was a man with the inborn power of visualization, on the other hand a man with a total lack of it. The difference between success and failure.

Because of these conclusions it might be pointed out that picture sense is a greater asset in the production of pictures than a general experience in human emotions. The argument might stand if it were not for the fact that the cameraman-director is not as yet great. Indeed, he is several degrees below the heights reached by the *creme de la creme* of the craft. As yet he has only attempted light romance on the screen, the easiest sort of picture to produce and to produce well as has been pointed out. As yet his real emotional gamut has not been brought into play. It is an unknown quantity. When it becomes known we may determine the degree of the director's greatness.

Every studio has its stories regarding the amusing predicaments in which a director would have found himself had he not previously taken stock of the situation and summoned his power of visualization to his assistance.

It might be well to cite a simple case in point to thoroughly bring out the value of this ability.

For instance, a director came upon the following sequence of scenes in a scenario he was scheduled to produce:

SCENE 45—INTERIOR BALLROOM. FULL SHOT

Host and hostess stand at door in f.g. receiving late guests. General dancing and ad lib activity in b.g. Run for a few feet and then bring in Mary escorted by John. They exchange greetings with host and hostess.

SCENE 46—INTERIOR BALLROOM. SEMI-CLOSEUP

Richard sees Mary enter and starts off toward her.

SCENE 47—INTERIOR. MEDIUM SHOT

Mary turns from greeting host and hostess while John is still talking with them. Richard enters and confronts Mary. He speaks hotly.

Spoken Title:

"You dare to come here, now that I've found you out?"

SCENE 48—INTERIOR BALLROOM. CLOSESHOT

Richard and Mary. Richard completes title. She looks at him with scorn. He rages on a few moments and then exists.

SCENE 49—INTERIOR BALLROOM. FULL SHOT

Mary turns to John who leaves host and hostess, and the couple make their way across the dance floor.

This, of course, is but a section of a script. Moreover, it is as technically perfect as anyone could desire. And yet here the scenario writer has Richard denouncing Mary in a closeshot, denouncing her quite savagely, and right on top of this, in the next scene, she is walking serenely on with her partner, neither he nor any of the others in the crowded room having noticed the previous scene.

This, of course, is an exceedingly obvious instance of how the ability to visualize comes to the director's aid. Yet there are many more subtle errors and superficially more realistic, that are ever lurking in a manuscript, lurking so securely as to sometimes escape notice.

You may choose to say again, "Tush, the scenario writer lacked common sense when he wrote the above sequence of scenes."

And so he did. After all, common sense when applied to the art of directing is none other than "picture sense," the power of visualization. And so we arrive back at the beginning of the chapter.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATION FOR PRODUCTION

THE routine attached to a director's task before he begins actual production.—Also some instances of stellar temperament, which, though mildly amusing in their relation, are something akin to tragedy in their enactment

CHAPTER III

Before going further into the requirements of actual directing and the methods employed by certain directors, the various processes through which a scenario goes before the actual work of production starts, can be noted with benefit.

The scenario writer finishes his manuscript and the director goes into retirement for a day or two to study it and to put it through the test of visualization.

In the meantime other copies of the manuscript have been placed with the various departments of production of the studio.

The production department receives a copy. It is the duty of this department, first of all, to estimate the cost of the picture. So a "scene plot" is made. This consists of the description of each interior "setting" and exterior "location" called for in the story. A list is made as follows:

Interiors
Ball room
Kitchen
Living room
Cafe
Etc., etc.
Exteriors
Waterfalls
Open road
Large field
Etc., etc.

After the description of each interior and exterior are placed the numbers representing the manuscript scenes that are played in each interior and exterior.

The cost of production is then estimated. The production manager, the head of the studio, a man who strives to combine the ability of a business man with the feeling of an artist, perhaps sees a way whereby the kitchen scenes can be transferred to the living room. This will eliminate the cost of erecting the kitchen setting.

Details such as this attended to, he will then give orders to the art and property departments to start on erecting the first setting. This is usually the one in which the greatest number of scenes are enacted.

The art department makes plans for the setting. When these are passed they are given to the boss carpenter who sets his men at work on the actual preparation of the set.

When they have finished the art department in conjunction with the property and drapery departments "dress" the set. This is the working of fixing it up and making it look like the real thing.

In the meantime the picture is being cast. Probably the star and leading man are already chosen. Then the casting director makes the list of all the actors, actresses and "extras" needed in the production of the picture.

He refers to his files and calls upon the people he needs, either upon those in the stock company which most studios of size maintain, or from the numerous agencies who manage the players.

His selections are then submitted to the director and the production manager for O. K.

In the meantime the location department has secured a list of the exterior scenes required by the picture. The location man refers to his files containing pictures of every likely location within a reasonable distance of the studio. He must find waterfalls, open road and a large field.

He selects these locations, being sure that the physical action of the story can be played in those he selects and then submits them to the director. If the director has a reason for not liking any of them, the location man must jump into his automobile and tour the countryside for suitable substitutes to his first selections.

All rather hard and serious work.

Then the director starts to work. The production department must watch him and have the next setting ready for him on time so that not a day will be wasted. If more than one or two companies are working in the studio there may not be room to erect the next setting. Then, perhaps, if weather permits, the director goes out on location.

Thus he is obliged to jump from one place in the story to another. He may be shooting scenes in the last part of the picture on one day and scenes in the first part a few days later.

All this is the routine work that must be gone through with the production of each picture.

Then the temperament of the actors and actresses comes in—comes in very strongly for that matter. If

TRUE AND PENETRATING CHARACTERIZATION FEATURES WIN DE MILLE'S "MISS LULU BETT"

"THE LOST ROMANCE," A PICTURE DIRECTED BY WILLIAM DE MILLE, BEARS THE SAME TRUE RELATION TO THE UPPER CRUST OF THE SOCIAL PIE AS "MISS LULU BETT" DOES TO THE MIDDLE PART

the director be working with a female star she may complain as to her leading man.

"What's the matter with him?" the director will ask. "Can't he act?"

"Yes, but he is not quite tall enough," answers the star, "why can't I have So-and-So from my last picture?"

"Well, So-and-So is busy on another picture just now, sorry," answers the director.

"I won't work without him," this from the star.

Of course she will work without him. She has to. The director knows this. So does she. But he has to handle her diplomatically, to say the least.

He would like to come out and say: "You *will* work with any leading man they give us." But he doesn't. He knows the temperament of the feminine star.

He summons all his reserve to his rescue and speaks to the lady in cooing words. He brushes her ruffled fur the right way. Exasperated husbands might take a fine example from him.

After a few minutes talk he has succeeded in convincing the lady that Such-and-Such has So-and-So beaten eighty ways as to general ability, furthermore, his contrasting complexion shows her off to much better advantage.

Then the star, thoroughly convinced, cheers the director up with such an answer as: "Oh, all right, if you insist, but I did want So-and-So."

She wouldn't dream of giving in and showing the director he was right. The director doesn't get such satisfaction. But if he's wise he doesn't bother about it.

And so the work of production can go on. One day while the director is working in the cafe setting, which may be erected to represent a Parisian cafe an extra will come up to him and tell him that it is all wrong.

"Because," he will say, "I've been in a cafe in Paris."

"Well, were you in all the cafes of Paris?," the director will politely ask.

"No, but this one didn't have—"

"Back to your place then, please," answers the director if he maintains his diplomacy and poise and retains his anger.

Another extra will have too much makeup on. The director must know how makeup photographs, what its effects are with people of various complexions and under certain lights.

The extra will resent being sent back to the dressing room and told to alter his face. It is a reflection on his ability. Another case where diplomacy is demanded.

And so finally the director gets everything working smoothly. He gains the confidence of the star and the leading man. He shows the extras that he knows his business and is perfectly able to look out for it, without their assistance.

The only trouble is that just about at this point the director has finished the picture.

CHAPTER IV

THE METHOD OF WILLIAM DE MILLE

FACTS regarding the manner in which the majority of pictures are made.—The new order of producing pictures "in continuity" with some interesting remarks on the subject from William C. De Mille, director of "Lulu Bett" and "The Lost Romance."

CHAPTER IV

One of the most highly publicized tasks which fall to the lot of the director, highly publicized because of its mere freakishness, is the routine which decrees that he must often begin "shooting" his picture in the middle or at the end of his story, or at any intermediate point except the very first scene. Press agents delight in harping on this fact, calling attention to the mental agility of the director in being able to jump from love scene to angry outburst, omitting intervening action in the jump and coming back to it at a later date.

This is due to the fact, as has just been stated, that all scenes taking place in the same set or exterior location must, for economy's and convenience's sake, be photographed at once or rather successively.

The "scene plot," compiled by the production department, lists the number of interior settings and exterior locations required by the picture and after the description of each scene in the scene plot a row of numbers, each indicating a separate scene to be played in the set or location, follows. Thus a section of a scene plot may read:

LIVING ROOM: Scenes 19, 20, 21, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 159, 160, etc.

DINING ROOM: Scenes 1, 2, 3, 4, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 291, 292, 293, etc.

Of all the settings required let it be said that the living room contains the majority of the action to be

photographed. In all likelihood, then, this set is the first one to be erected by the studio production department and as a result the director begins his first days work with scene No. 19 and follows it with scenes No. 20 and No. 21, which disclose closely related action.

Let us say that these early scenes have to do with the first happy days of a young married couple. They discover the little joys and hardships of housekeeping, etc. Well and good. But immediately after producing these scenes the director is forced to jump ahead to the sequence beginning with scene No. 81. Here is a point considerably further advanced in the story and so the director is obliged to mentally leap the action intervening between his first sequence and his second. Whereas Mary and John may have been perfectly contented in scene No. 19, they may have grown two years older and separated altogether in scene No. 81. Inasmuch as he "shoots" No. 81 immediately after No. 21 it must be seen that the director is obliged to adapt his own mood to this peculiar state of affairs created by the ramifications of studio organization. He must live two years in half an hour or less. Such procedure requires mental gymnastics that are more difficult than the act of the vaudeville contortionist.

It is needless to add that this jumping hither and thither and back to hither again, requires a minutely adjusted sense of continuity on the director's part. To keep his whole story and the comparative values of certain sequences straight in his mind, is no easy matter. Further complications enter when it is realized that

a sequence of exterior scenes may follow immediately after a sequence of interior scenes, these exteriors being closely identified with the interiors and requiring the same mood. But yet again the plan of work mapped out by the production department may postpone these scenes to the very last day of work. Thus the director is forced to jump back into the early mood of his story after he has rehearsed himself and become thoroughly satiated with all the other moods, a task imposing seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

Time was when it used to be the boast of some directors that they could produce a picture in this jumping about fashion just as well as if they had been permitted to "shoot" their stories in actual continuity. The method is still followed but the boasts aren't as audible.

This method of production gave a fine opening to those critics who cried out that the motion pictures would always remain in the cheap state so well described in the word "movie." Really artistic results could never be secured with this eternal jumping from 4 to 11 to 44, they said. They added, quite rightly too, that a consistent, well developed, psychologically ascending character was impossible of achievement under this plan. Inasmuch as actors often had to play their climaxes first and then go back and play a scene that led up to the climax, there was considerable point to the arguments of the critics.

A very few directors have now managed to arrange their work so that they can actually make their pictures in continuity, beginning with scene No. 1 and proceed-

ing straight through, with but slight deviations, to the end.

Among these directors and leading them all in results attained, stands William C. De Mille, a director responsible for such artistic successes as "The Prince Chap" and "Conrad in Quest of His Youth," both with Thomas Meighan, and "The Lost Romance" and "Miss Lulu Bett," with casts very nearly approaching the all-star state.

Mr. De Mille specializes in stories containing the true and dramatic psychological development of character. The artificial melodramatics and blatant heroics he subdues to unnoticeable effect or more often eliminates entirely. His arc of emotional experience is filled, it is more than obvious, with all the sensitive lines imaginable. In fact Mr. De Mille is one of the few artistic directors in the field today, though perhaps his name has not been as highly publicized as have those of lesser lights.

Mr. De Mille states that both he and his brother, Cecil, produce their pictures in actual continuity. "With such pictures as those in which I specialize," he says, "and by this specialty I mean of course pictures such as "Miss Lulu Bett" and "The Lost Romance," pictures that depend considerably for their value on the consistent and progressive development of character, rather than mere physical action, producing in continuity is tremendously effective as well as a great help."

"To jump about in character studies of this type would be exceedingly difficult for both players and

director and in many cases, suitable results would not be obtained."

Let it be inserted here that other directors may scoff at the De Mille idea, but it may also be noted by students of the screen that no other director has achieved the highly artistic results in this line of pictures that stand to the credit of William De Mille.

Let him continue: "The method of starting with scene No. 1 and proceeding numerically to the conclusion of the picture is of benefit to both players and director. The players characterizations become well sustained, they take a greater interest in their work as they realize it growing consistently with each day's effort. And the director is able to get a better slant on his story as he watches the whole thing grow and take definite shape from day to day."

Those who ask for proof need only look at one of the four pictures mentioned above that Mr. De Mille produced. "The Lost Romance" contained four of the most real characters ever developed on the screen. As for the two pictures in which Thomas Meighan appeared it is safe to say that his work in them far surpassed anything else he has done before or since with the exception of "The Miracle Man." And the basic success of these two Meighan pictures was in each case, the characterization rendered by the star. This characterization *might* have been achieved by other methods but it is doubtful. Certainly De Mille's method has proven itself.

The production of a picture after this method necessitates a carefully prepared manuscript, for once again,

WILLIAM DE MILLE USING THE MAGNA-VOX, AN ELECTRICAL IMPROVEMENT ON THE MEGAPHONE, WHICH CARRIES HIS VOICE DIRECTLY ONTO THE "SET" AND INTO THE EARS OF HIS PLAYERS

"MISS LULU BETT," DIRECTED BY WILLIAM DE MILLE, LIFTS THE CURTAIN
ON A DRAMATIC SLICE OF LIFE

the efficiency demanded by studio organization enters into the scheme of things. "Naturally the continuity writer must take particular care in building scripts for me," Mr. De Mille continues, "for it may be seen that this arrangement of production calls for an equally careful arrangement of the different settings employed in the picture. The studio seldom permits a director to keep more than three or four settings standing at once for any considerable length of time. So it must be arranged that the early action of the picture takes place in the first three or four settings erected. In other words, the settings of the production must be progressive as well as the characterizations. It is a little mechanical trick that is much easier to utilize than it is to explain."

It may be added that Mr. De Mille himself works with his writers on their scenarios and supervises all such details as this matter of mechanics as well as the more important matters that come under the head of scenario writing.

To make his method easier Mr. De Mille has evolved still another production trick which is interesting to say the least. Many directors after they have photographed a full scene are obliged to lose valuable time in moving the camera and lights up to the principal players in order to take closeups. This time may also account for the loss of the proper mood on the part of the director and his players.

To eliminate this unsatisfactory condition, Mr. De Mille has his settings built so that he can photograph them from different angles and from different distances

"MISS LULU BETT," DIRECTED BY WILLIAM DE MILLE, LIFTS THE CURTAIN ON A DRAMATIC SLICE OF LIFE

at the same time. So his players while acting one long scene are actually photographed in full shots, semi-closeups and closeups. The closeups cameras are "blinded" behind convenient pieces of scenery.

This step of producing pictures in continuity is a big one and one in the right direction. Pictures are not perfect in this day by any manner of means but when a point is reached when all those that demand to be so treated can be produced in continuity, the results will doubtless be obviously better.

Naturally, however, this method would not apply to the director working on the "action" picture such as that in which William S. Hart and Tom Mix appear. In such cases where physical action and thrills are set at a premium, it would be useless and an entire waste of time to insist on producing in continuity. Imagine calling "Halt!" on a long shot of advancing train robbers while the cameraman moved up and took a closeup of the bad man's finger pulling the trigger! And then moving back again and permitting the train robbers to proceed.

Such a procedure would be as foolish as to attempt to produce one of De Mille's works in the old fashioned way.

CHAPTER V

CECIL DE MILLE ALSO SPEAKS

IN which it is noted that the more famous De Mille, besides employing the method of production described by his brother, places unusual faith in the intelligence of his actors and actresses.—"Never show them HOW but tell them WHAT" is his formula.—A case where an actor insisted on being shown

Chapter V

Mention of one of the De Milles immediately brings to mind the other. Cecil and William are as easy to say in one breath as Anthony and Cleopatra, Nip and Tuck and Mutt and Jeff.

Cecil B. De Mille is one of the few directors of today whose name carries a picture to the financial success that greets a picture bearing the name of a great star. It appears that he first rode to national fame when he inaugurated a series of pictures bearing such mandatory and interrogatory titles as "Don't Change Your Husband" and "Why Change Your Wife?"

But long before this he was cutting wide swaths in the old fashioned method of directing by doing his work in a distinctly individual and better way. Pictures such as "The Golden Chance" and the first edition of "The Squaw Man" stamped him as considerably more of an artist than the earlier pioneers in the art of directing.

Cecil De Mille was, perhaps, the first director to use the method of producing his pictures in continuity, as outlined by his brother in the previous chapter. Perhaps this is the reason that he early secured such superior results to those achieved by the general run of directors in the early days.

Or perhaps on the other hand it is his ability to handle actors and actresses so as to get the very utmost from their efforts. For Mr. De Mille claims that one

of the primal rules of directing is "never tell an actor *how* to play a scene."

On this axiom, he states, lies the secret of achieving real characterization and absolute naturalness on the screen.

This may appear to be a perfectly natural conclusion to some readers. An actor of ability knows his business and therefore knows how to develop a true characterization. All he needs is a few words from the director as regards the timing of his transition from one emotion to another.

This is becoming more and more true as the art of picture production develops but the time is easily recalled when directors boasted that they acted out every part of the picture so that their casts might secure the proper grasp of the story.

I remember very well one director, a big man in his day but who has since sunk to oblivion as far as picture production goes, who used to take great delight in showing his players how to play certain scenes.

After a few preliminary rehearsals he would become disgusted, or pretend to become disgusted, with the efforts of his cast and thereupon he would act out each and every role for the cast's benefit. It was rather ridiculous to see him affecting the coy mannerisms of an ingenue, then jumping quickly into the role of the hero and from there to the contrasting part of the villain. He would even perform the butler with pompous dignity for the benefit of the extra who was playing the part.

But what effect did all this play on the director's

part have on the onlooking cast? The director's personality and individual mannerisms were displayed in every role. Thereafter the actors endeavored to imitate *him* not to enact their parts. The hero merely gave an imitation of the director giving an imitation of the hero. The ingenue gave an imitation of the director imitating the ingenue. And so on through all the parts.

The results, it need hardly be pointed out, were not natural. In the end all the players gave bad imitations of the director. On top of this they endeavored to effect his mannerism and tricks of expression. As a consequence there was absolutely nothing distinctive about the completed picture. It was the director's and no one else's. The director, being conceited to a great degree, was naturally delighted with the result. But he was the only one delighted with it as is testified by the fact that he is not in the art today.

This method has gradually been forced out of the studio. There are few directors who insist on acting every part out nowadays. There are some left but not many. A few more years and they will all disappear and then we will have still better pictures.

Mr. De Mille evidently believes that a good many directors of the present day still adhere to the old fashioned method. It is to be hoped that he isn't altogether right.

"Too many directors," he says, "consider it their duty to show an actor just how to play every scene in the picture. This type of director insists on acting out every role and demands that his cast shall mimic his

action before the camera. The results are woefully wooden, unnatural and characterless.

"In the perfect photoplay each character must be distinctly itself. It must be sharply differentiated from all other characters in that particular play. This result can only be achieved by permitting each actor or actress to work out his or her own interpretation of a role.

"If I show an actor how to pick up a paper or a book in a scene he will consciously strive to imitate my actions. Now, what may be perfectly natural for me may be unnatural and awkward for him. At the best his attempt to copy my model will be but a poor reproduction of Cecil B. De Mille on the screen. If I carried that program through with respect to each player I would have just as many weak versions of Cecil B. De Mille as there are characters in the play.

"If, on the other hand, I explain to the actor what the action of the scene is and what idea or emotion I want him to convey to the spectator and then permit him to work out his own interpretation of the scene I have a distinctive, natural and far more powerful piece of work from that actor. I assume that every actor is better at creating than mimicing me.

"My task comes in in my effort to perfect his interpretation by helpful criticism and suggestion but not by example.

"Before beginning actual production on a picture I make it a rule to call together the entire cast and the technical staff. At this meeting I tell them the story with all the detail of characterization and atmosphere that I am capable of putting into it. I do not read

them the continuity scene by scene. I try to make them see and feel the story and the characters and, as everyone in the production art knows, the straight reading of a continuity is an uninteresting and tedious proposition.

"So when the cameras actually start to turn, each member of the cast has his or her own characterization and its relationship to the others well in mind.

"At the beginning of each scene I sketch out verbally what the action of the scene is to convey to picture audiences. Then comes a rehearsal and often many rehearsals before it is actually filmed. But through all these rehearsals I make a point of never showing anyone *how* to do a thing. If an actor does something badly or awkwardly I try to locate the cause of the awkwardness and remedy that. By way of example the scene may call for an actor to be seated at a desk thoughtfully smoking a pipe. Perhaps the actor may handle the pipe like an amateur. Inquiry may uncover the fact that he is far more at home smoking a cigar. Thereupon the cigar is supplied and the scene proceeds smoothly.

"A little thing, to be sure, but between the pipe and the cigar lies the difference between a natural and an unnatural performance.

"No actor worthy of his calling should have to be shown how to play a scene. He may have to be coached; that is part of the director's task. But it is no part of the director's duties to furnish the acting model for any or every character in the play. I firmly believe that attempts on the part of the directors to show actors how

Melbourne Spurr

CECIL B. DE MILLE

CECIL B. DE MILLE AT WORK

to do certain things will inevitably result in bad performances and consequent damage to the quality of the finished production."

Mr. De Mille's comments are very interesting. It is to be supposed that he does not give copies of the picture continuity to his players that they may thoroughly acquaint themselves with the parts they are to play before actual production work begins. Today the majority of directors like to do this.

However, as Mr. De Mille says, "I tell the story with all the detail of characterization and atmosphere that I am capable of putting into it." This appears to be an admirable course to pursue. Given the continuity an actor may get quite the wrong idea of the role he is to play. Listening to his director sketch the story, including in it his ideas as to its development, must of necessity give the actor a clear idea of his work and an idea more co-inciding with that of the director's. Thus it might appear that misunderstanding and argument are well disposed of.

On the other hand Mr. De Mille is fortunate in having players of general intelligence and ability to deal with. Look over any of the casts he has employed in his recent productions, "The Affairs of Anatol" for example, and you will discover that there is hardly an unknown in the entire cast.

It is amusing to consider what Mr. De Mille would have done if he had had the task of producing "Cappy Ricks," a picture made by one of the directors that Mr. De Mille developed, Tom Forman. There was

the role of a Swedish sea captain, humorously called "All-Hands-and-Feet" in this picture.

An old prize fighter was selected to play the role. He looked the part to perfection. But the scenario called for the star, Thomas Meighan, to engage in a fight with him and knock him out. The ancient fighter was perfectly agreeable for the fight, in fact he battered his opponent considerably but when it came time for him to be knocked out he just wouldn't fall down.

The scene was tried over and over again and each time when it came to the psychological moment "All-Hands-and-Feet" positively refused to fall down on the deck after Mr. Meighan had delivered a blow on the chin.

"Go down! Down!" Mr. Forman kept repeating wrathfully.

"Down? Down?" queried the one time prize fighter, "I no understand what you say."

Eventually Mr. Forman had to submit to the ignominy of allowing Mr. Meighan to land on his chin and drop him on the deck.

A broad grin crept over the benign countenance of "All-Hands-and-Feet" as he said, "Ah, I never bane knocked down, I see what you mean. I try to fall next time".

Mr. Forman and Mr. Meighan started a movement to back "All-Hands-and-Feet" for the championship of the world. But when their subject heard of it he mysteriously disappeared. Possibly he didn't want to be taught what "down" meant in a serious way.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN ACTING ABILITY HELPS

AN amusing incident of studio life that might be seen by a visitor any day in the week with the moral "Never be shocked by anything you see in a motion picture studio."

CHAPTER VI

No better illustration of the value of Mr. De Mille's foregoing remarks can be found than in the case of Charles Chaplin. Mr. Chaplin as well as being the world's greatest comedian, also directs his pictures.

Suppose that Mr. Chaplin decided to rehearse in every part of his picture so that his supporting players might pattern his performances after his. The completed product would show: One good Charles Chaplin and a dozen bad imitations of Charles Chaplin.

Mr. Chaplin has imitators enough without going to the trouble of bringing them right into his own pictures.

Incidentally the task that confronts the actor-director is extraordinarily difficult. He not only is obliged to face the lights in makeup and drop his own personality in the role he is playing but he must also be able to see his own work from behind the camera, to retain his perspective from this angle of the production as well as from the acting angle.

His is thus a twice difficult task and perhaps for this reason there are few surviving actor-directors. In the old days there used to be loads of them but the pictures were then too much actor and not enough director.

Besides Charles Chaplin only a few survive today, prominent among them being William S. Hart and Charles Ray and it may be said that each of these stars has done his best work when directed by someone else. When they essay the dual task of acting and directing

they pay too little attention to the supervision of the entire production and concentrate too largely on their own performances.

Despite this criticism of the actor-director and the cry against directors showing their players how to perform a scene no one can deny that a knowledge of acting, or rather a knowledge of how to act, comes in very handy from the director's point of view.

A little over a year ago I happened to visit one of the large eastern studios when John S. Robertson, probably one of the most competent men in the production craft was working there. Mr. Robertson has years of acting on the stage behind him. He played in stock for a long period and knows every role in every play of importance produced over a period of considerable years.

However Mr. Robertson is now a director and not an actor. What was my surprise then to discover him in the midst of a highly dramatic scene. The setting was the dressing room of a stage star. Mr. Robertson was half sitting, half reclining on a luxurious chaise-lounge. The atmosphere was fairly exotic.

Marc McDermott, excellent character actor that he is, stood in the background, immaculately clad in evening attire. He was gazing at Mr. Robertson with the glint of evil in his eyes.

The door opened and in walked Reginald Denny who immediately rushed madly to the couch on which Mr. Robertson was reclining languidly and proceeded to make violent love to him.

Naturally my first impulse was to make matters known to the Department of Health but on inquiry I

soon learned that Mr. Robertson was merely playing Elsie Ferguson's role in the preliminary rehearsal of "Footlights." Miss Ferguson was a little late and Mr. Robertson was obliging for the benefit of Messrs. McDermott and Denny!

So I watched them further. A long scene was enacted with Mr. Robertson playing Miss Ferguson's role exactly as the script called. And he was doing it as if it were the most natural thing in the world. As for the other participants they were so engrossed in their work that they didn't seem to notice the absence of Miss Ferguson and the presence of her capable substitute.

When at last she did appear the scene only needed one brief rehearsal before the cameras started to grind.

Besides pointing out the value of the ability to act to the director this little tale also points another moral, to wit, never be shocked at anything you see in a motion picture studio.

CHAPTER VII

REX INGRAM ON "ATMOSPHERE"

THE director of "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and "The Conquering Power," two of the screen's greatest achievements, has something to say about settings and atmosphere.—Using impressionistic methods to realistic ends is his forte.—The effort demanded to achieve convincing realism on the screen

CHAPTER VII

Few people who closely follow the screen will need an introduction to Rex Ingram, the young director who startled the whole screen world with the artistry of his work in "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." Mr. Ingram is one of those to whom the screen gave one of its biggest opportunities. For a long time before "The Four Horsemen" was completed the wiseacres were prowling about, shaking their beards and stating that the young director was running wild and breaking the producing company that was sponsoring the picture.

How he startled the world with a magnificent piece of work is still recent screen history. And how he followed his first big success with another great picture, "The Conquering Power," is also still fresh in the minds of picture audiences.

Among many others one thing distinguished both "The Four Horsemen" and "The Conquering Power" and that was the remarkable atmosphere which Mr. Ingram had managed to inject in both subjects. It was absolutely startling in its effect. Those who hadn't stopped to bother about Mr. Ingram's early studies which included art in two forms, painting and sculpturing, didn't know how in the world he had managed it. However, it appears from Mr. Ingram's own words that he merely used common sense and applied the methods of the older arts to the craft of picture production.

REX INGRAM, REHEARSING ONE OF THE RACE TRACK SCENES IN "TURN TO THE RIGHT"

REX INGRAM DIRECTING ONE OF THE MANY MOB SCENES IN
"THE FOUR HORSEMEN"

He has some very interesting things to say regarding the value of atmosphere in motion picture production.

He writes: "After sincerity of characterization and directness in story-telling, atmosphere does more toward making an audience accept what it sees on the screen than anything else. By accept, I mean, be entertained, engrossed in the subject.

"While good atmosphere gives an air of reality to a picture yet the most convincing and engrossing atmosphere is often far from realistic. This is so because the aim of the director should be to get over the *effect* of the atmosphere he desires, rather than the actual atmosphere which exists in such scenes as he may wish to portray, and which, if reduced literally to the screen would be quite unconvincing."

This principle of Mr. Ingram's is the ideal one on which to work. It is the principle of other arts beside that of producing motion pictures. It is the principle of creating something by implication and suggestion rather than actual reproduction. This, however, detracts not one whit from the credit that is Mr. Ingram's for being the first director to apply it to picture production in a consistent and effective way.

Mr. Ingram continues: "Whether a scene is being made of a beach-comber's shanty, an underworld basement saloon, a pool-hall, a ship's cabin, a shoe factory or a smart restaurant, not only should the aim be to convince the audience, but enough study should be given the subject, in each case, to convince the habitues of any of these places that they are in familiar surroundings.

"One of the most interesting sets that I have ever handled from an atmospheric standpoint was the interior of a derelict ship, beached, and become the hang-out of beach-combers, in "Under Crimson Skies," a production some years old. Conrad, the master writer of the sea, never offered a more wonderful opportunity for color than did this episode in the story provided by J. G. Hawks, with its thrilling climax in the battle in the surf between the white man and the black giant.

"In 'The Four Horsemen,' the basement resort of the Buenos Aires *bocca,* or river front hang-out, furnished plenty of chances to make colorful pictures—yet had I been literal in the way I handled it the effect would not have been anything nearly as realistic. For I doubt if anything just like that dive ever existed in the Argentine or anywhere else for that matter.

"The set was a Spanish version of a bowery cellar saloon that I used in a picture which I made several years before and re-created to suit the episode suggested in the great Ibanez novel. The signs on the wall, the types of men, in fact all the bits of atmosphere in the place were the results of painstaking efforts to get "color" and local atmosphere into the set. In one corner a sign hung which was the advertisement of a notorious 'crimp,' a sailor's boarding-house keeper, whose establishment was on the *bocca* for years. An old sailor who was working in the scene and who had lived in Buenos Aires came to me and said: 'I've been shanghaied by that blood-sucker.'

"I have gone so far as to have my principals speak the language of the country in which the picture is

laid. Few of them like to go to this trouble but it helps them materially in keeping in the required atmosphere. The results on the screen are so encouraging that after they see what it has done for them the players don't mind the extra study that this course entails.

"I know of no branch of a director's job that is more fascinating than getting color and atmosphere into the settings—thinking out bits of 'business,' little flashes of life which, though only on the screen for a few moments, can give an air of reality to an entire sequence of scenes, that would perhaps otherwise be lacking.

"In screening Balzac, as I did in making 'The Conquering Power,' fine atmosphere and characterization are of more vital importance than incident, for nine times out of ten it is the characters in a great novel that we remember—rather than the plot."

Mr. Ingram is going on his way, creating distinctly unusual pictures and one of the chief reasons is this great attention that he pays to atmosphere by suggestion rather than actual reproduction. Novelists call atmosphere "background." The terms are the same. The novelist creates his background, his atmosphere, by painting pictures with words, suggesting the locale and environment of history. Thus with Mr. Ingram. He *suggests* scenes in his pictures and refuses to *label* them. In this respect he is farther advanced than most any director in the art today.

This idea of suggestion can easily be carried too far, however. The German producer who turned out "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" carried it to the point of alleged futuristic "art." He aimed to suggest but

instead he puzzled completely. The producer of "The Golem," another German picture, came nearer the point. But it appears that neither of them equalled or much less surpassed the work of Mr. Ingram in his two fine productions already mentioned.

Mr. Ingram is one of the very few new directors that the screen has developed in recent years. New in the sense that he has attracted attention not only within the art of picture production but without it as well. He is one of those men who have been recruited from other fields of endeavor and who has fulfilled expectations and gone far beyond them. A man such as Ingram will always have an opportunity. He may have to fight for it but it's bound to come.

Mr. Ingram's remarks about building settings, so that people who frequent such places in real life will instantly recognize them, opens an interesting field of comment. Even if a director labors painstakingly to achieve the proper atmosphere there are always some crabs in the audience who are bound to take exception. If they can't find something to criticise in the setting they criticise the way the extras play their parts.

For a long time doctors have been grossly misrepresented on the screen. Doctors in particular have objected that they never act as if possessed of diplomas. A director recently resolved to put an end to such criticism. It annoyed him particularly inasmuch as he had a friend, an M.D., who was forever poking fun at him whenever he introduced a man of medicine into a picture.

When the director in question completed his latest picture he took his doctor friend to see it and after it was over asked him specially how he liked the performance of the actor who played the doctor.

"Terrible," replied his friend, "The man never saw a clinic and shows it. No real doctor would act like that."

"That's funny," replied the director with a smile, "because, you see he wasn't an actor but—a doctor!"

CHAPTER VIII

MAINLY ABOUT D. W. GRIFFITH

THE producer and director of "The Birth of a Nation," "Hearts of the World," "Way Down East," and "Orphans of the Storm" works with amazing disregard of system.—Others attempt his methods of procedure and come more often to grief than to glory

Chapter VIII

No volume on the subject of directing would be complete without the mention of D. W. Griffith. And yet it is utterly impossible to deal with D. W. Griffith in any comprehensive way. The producer of the first great picture "The Birth of a Nation," the man who strove for something beyond the times in "Intolerance," the artist who made "Hearts of the World" and the masterly technician who stands sponsor for "Way Down East," is singularly hard to approach from any ordinary viewpoint.

There is no doubt that D. W. Griffith at intervals gives just cause to the commentators who place him at the top of the list of all directors. But at the same time he often does the most ordinary of things on the screen. In one picture he is an artist and in the next he appears in the light of a producer of hack pieces of motion picture film.

The reason, no doubt, is that Mr. Griffith is a business man as well as an artist. He sinks an unusually large amount of money in a picture such as "Hearts of the World" and then realizes that, while the returns from such a subject are slowly accruing, he must needs turn out a few pot-boilers to keep the wolf from the door. Thus "Hearts of the World" was followed by two or three shorter and less pretentious war pictures of commonplace variety.

Mr. Griffith is constantly exasperating people by such mixed proceedings and just when his long-suffer-

ing public has decided to forsake him forever and turn to more consistent directors and producers, he startles the world again with another masterpiece.

His latest picture, for instance, "Orphans of the Storm," has proven an artistic success from almost every viewpoint, and has been quite capable of disposing of the bad taste left in the collective mouths of critical audiences by his recent "Dream Street."

One of the most interesting things about Mr. Griffith to the lay mind is that he never uses the usual continuity that the majority of directors employ. He has his story clearly in his mind before he starts work. He has something of a subconscious realization of how many different scenes ought to be embraced in each episode and he sets about his work accordingly.

This might not seem so difficult as it really is if Mr. Griffith employed the De Mille method of directing his pictures in continuity, beginning with scene No. 1 and proceeding numerically onward. But Mr. Griffith sails right along using one setting or scene after another without much regard for continuity. He takes the number of shots required in each setting and scene with but slight assistance from notes and memoranda.

He works in the following order: A scene may represent a room in a country home. A son is saying goodbye to his mother; he is either going away to war or going to the city to make good. There is, of course, a tearful parting. Now the average director will refer to his script and note that the scenario writer has given him, say, twelve different shots, including close-

D. W. GRIFFITH

D. W. GRIFFITH IMMORTALIZED AN ANCIENT MELODRAMA IN "WAY DOWN EAST"

ups, long shots and semi-closeups in which to get the "goodbye" scene over and done with.

Mr. Griffith, on the other hand, will refer to no 'script of any kind, he will merely go about taking the sequence of scenes as they occur on the screen. There may be first a tearful closeup of the mother, then a close-up of the boy, nervous, happy, sad. Then a shot of both of them embracing and the son pulling away. Then a wider shot showing the son about to make his exit, but turning and coming back to say a last farewell to the mother. And so on and so forth. The action itself will suggest other scenes to Mr. Griffith.

Of course there are many other directors who work in the same way in some respects. Such a simple sequence as related above can be accomplished by any director without recourse to an elaborate continuity. But the majority of directors, even though they don't refer to a continuity minutely with respect to such sequences, have one handy so that they can refer to it in times when the complications of the story begin to pile up.

To draw a clearer parallel, the usual director is like a motorist who has carefully studied his road map before setting out on a journey and who refers to it time and again during the trip, specially when he comes to a cross roads. Mr. Griffith never studies a road map. He just jumps into his car and starts going. When he comes to a crossing he takes the road that seems the best to him. Sometimes this road is the wrong one. More often it is right. But at least Mr. Griffith has had the fun of exploring without really knowing

what is coming next. As a consequence, his experiences even though at times poor with respect to picture technique, are never tedious but always refreshing.

Mr. Griffith explains his aversions to a cut-and-dried continuity by saying that he doesn't want other people to think out his story for him. Rather he prefers to think it out himself. He believes that the man who works directly from a continuity is merely carrying out the plans of the scenario writer. It doesn't take any great exertion, he believes, to successfully carry out these ideas if they are good ideas. On the other hand when he himself sets to work without a continuity he has the added joy of creating something as he goes along. He is not working from some other person's brain but from his own.

Mr. Griffith's method of working has its advantages and, under certain circumstances, it would have its grave disadvantages. Mr. Griffith, being his own employer, can take all the time he wishes on the making of his productions. A director working on a schedule that makes some consideration of time would be quite at a loss in working without a 'script. The chances are he would become hopelessly involved before he got halfway through and wonder what he was producing. And this time schedule would not permit the director to sit down and puzzle himself out of his predicament for hours and hours the way Mr. Griffith does. And then, even if it did permit him so to do, the chances are again that he might not come out of the predicament with all the loose ends of his story neatly assorted the way Mr. Griffith does. After all,

there is only one Griffith and attempting to apply his methods to other directors is something like walking and walking around a block and wondering why you never get farther up town.

Times were, in the days of the old Biograph and Fine Arts companies, that Mr. Griffith had a number of directors working under his supervision. A number of these men, notably Chet Withey, Edward Dillon and the Franklin brothers have made marks for themselves with other companies, working somewhat on the Griffith method but usually with a continuity to guide them.

I know of one director who worked with Mr. Griffith long ago and who is still boasting of his association with him (for working with D. W., you see, grants one as much prestige in the picture world as having an ancestor that came over on the Mayflower gives one in the social world), but who has not yet made a good picture since he left his former chief.

Among other boasts this director includes the one that he never used a continuity when producing a picture. I happened to be up at his studio one day when he was involved in the production of a particularly difficult and heavy dramatic sequence of action. There were a number of players at work on a large setting and each one of them had an important part.

This director worked along fairly smoothly up to a certain point and then suddenly stopped. He was lost. Didn't know what came next. But rather than admit it to his company he sat staring at them for fully half an hour, then proceeded to pace the studio floor in great

agitation "seeking for the missing idea." He then announced that he would retire to his private office and think the matter over quietly. About five minutes later he emerged with all his ideas straightened out. Of course, to the gullible, his disappearing act had been the signal for a great inspiration but in reality, as I found out afterwards, he had gone into his office and referred to the continuity of the story which he had carefully secreted in his desk all the time.

The director's vanity would never permit him to admit this in public. He chose to be regarded as another Griffith. Unhappily for him his completed picture proved that he was far from another Griffith or even a second-rate one. Really Mr. Griffith has a lot to answer for in this matter. Either he or the vanity of the men who formerly worked with him has to be blamed. And as Mr. Griffith is a concrete object we might as well blame him.

The realization has dawned on the writer that this chapter is totally inadequate in giving any description of Mr. Griffith, apart from the small information that he works without a manuscript. Such, however, seems doomed to be the case. One cannot dissect Mr. Griffith, take him apart and explain this piece and that. This because he is considerably an artist and no real artist can tell exactly how he works and give the processes by which he achieves certain effects.

A painter will begin work on a fresh canvass by putting daubs of color here, there and everywhere. The layman doesn't know what in the deuce he is up to. But in the finished product these early daubs of color

ALL THE OLD CHARACTERS OF "WAY DOWN EAST" WERE RECREATED ON THE SCREEN WITH AMAZING FIDELITY

D. W. GRIFFITH

count largely in the effect created by the whole mass. Even the artist himself cannot explain concisely and clearly the why and wherefore of every daub he applied early in his creation.

So it is with Mr. Griffith. He probably could not explain his method of working himself. He goes ahead on his creation, putting a stroke here and another there. The why and wherefore of them are things undefinable. Perhaps when his picture is finished he can give you the whys and wherefores but the chances are that he can't. He only knows that he has striven for something and either succeeded or failed in the achievement of his ambition.

And so it is with other directors, after all is said and done. Some of the methods of other directors as set down earlier in these chapters are merely ideas, small gleanings; but in themselves alone they are no more responsible for the successes of these directors than are their names.

Chapter IX

MOUNTAINS AND MOLEHILLS

WHY D. W. Griffith has been more successful in producing spectacular features than other directors.—His ability to step from the mountain to the molehill with agility and delicacy.—The futility of mob scenes that mean mob scenes and nothing more

Chapter IX

The foregoing words on D. W. Griffith have brought to mind the matter of motion picture spectacles, those pictures telling a personal story before a background of masses of people and monstrous settings. There is small doubt but that the spectacle is the most difficult of all motion pictures to produce. Mr. Griffith has succeeded most often with such subjects, perhaps because he has attempted them more often. Rex Ingram succeeded admirably well in "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and no doubt will succeed again when he tries further, as he most surely will.

Many others have succeeded too, and many have failed, the chief reason for the failures being, it appears, that the spectacle idea appealed to the director in capital letters while he forgot all about the personal element of the story. No spectacle, no matter how grand and glittering and gorgeous, no matter how heavily peopled with costumed supernumeraries, no matter how thickly smeared with money and elaborate "art" can succeed if the director forgets about his personal story in the bigness of his background. He must be able to step from the mountain to the molehill with agility and with such delicacy of touch that he doesn't smash the molehill by treading on it as if it were the mountain.

As an example of this appreciation of both the spectacular and personal elements of story, no better picture can be found than Mr. Griffith's "Hearts of the

World," his story of the European war. He brought before the eye all the horrible realities of the battle field, used them to dramatic purpose time and again. And yet in the midst of all this spectacular action he never for once lost sight of the personal element in the story, this element represented on the battle field by Robert Harron who played the part of the young soldier. How many people who saw "Hearts of the World" can forget the scene in the shell hole in which the center of attention were the young soldier and the dying negro? This was one of the most remarkable of the personal, intimate touches in the picture and yet the very next moment the spectator was plunged back into the mass horror of the tremendous conflict.

This was only an instance of many. In the last scenes which looked forward to the armistice parade in Paris (looked forward to it with an uncanny amount of judgment), soldiers and citizens were seen going mad with joy in the streets of the city. A thrilling sight in itself were these mass scenes, showing thousands of people nearly breaking their own and their friends' necks with unrestrained joy at peace come at last.

But even in the midst of all these scenes of thrilling revelry the four principal characters of the picture were introduced rejoicing too. And the glimpses shown of them brought the thrills of the big scenes to a tremendous emotional climax.

It would seem a simple matter for the clear-thinking director to produce a spectacular picture at the same time keeping his finger on the pulse of the intimate, personal story that gives color and reality to the bigness

"THE THREE MUSKETEERS" COMBINED THE ELEMENTS OF ROMANCE AND THRILL IN EXACTLY THE RIGHT PROPORTIONS

DIRECTOR JOHN ROBERTSON SECURED EXCELLENT LIGHTING AND DERIVED WONDERFUL WORK FROM HIS CAST IN "SENTIMENTAL TOMMY"

of his backgrounds. But it is more often the case than not that the director who tackles a spectacle forgets his story in the mad rush for sweeping effect. As a consequence he loses his grip on the interest of his audience.

How many pictures could be named in which just mass scene after mass scene appeared on the screen, containing no dramatic purpose, no interest aside from their sheer spectacular value (an interest that soon dies if not fostered with glimpses of the personal story), just mass scene after mass scene until the spectator begins to wonder what in thunder the whole thing means? It seems offhand that any number of such pictures could be named.

But if the director keeps his senses about him he never loses sight of the little things of the spectacle, they are as vitally important as the mass action itself.

It might be appropriate to mention the recent German pictures in this connection. The German picture director is noted for the production of spectacular features. In some respects he surpasses the American director, namely in the artistry of his big scenes and the effective manner in which he handles large numbers of people but on the other hand the German director has the fault of overlooking the personal story in his eagerness to get the spectacular effects.

This fact is particularly noticeable in German pictures when they first come to this country. Of course the pictures first have to pass through the hands of experts. The titles are translated and revised to fit the styles the American public has long since expressed

itself satisfied with. But more important, much that the German director left in has to be cut out. Pictures made in Germany and shown here as five or six or seven reel features very often run eight or nine or ten reels when they first are imported here. And in these extra reels which the American cutters painlessly remove from here, there and everywhere in the long stretch of the film, are mob scenes used just because they are mob scenes. Mob scene follows mob scene, until each scene has no particular meaning, the mass effects grow tiresome and the spectator longs for a glimpse of the story forgotten so long ago by the director. The American cutter is able to eliminate much of these superfluous scenes but he can not give the intimate story the prominence that was denied it in the beginning by the German director.

Probably the reason why so many directors neglect this personal element in their spectacles is because of the fact that several years ago a big scene, that is a scene containing a few dozen or a few hundred people, was supposed to impress audiences with the fact that a lot of money had been spent on the picture and that therefore, because a lot of money was spent on it, it was a work of merit.

"Here," a director used to say when he had doubt in the value of the story he was working on, "Give me a big ball room set and a hundred people in evening clothes and I'll give this picture real class."

The argument sounds particularly false and unsound today as it was all the time. But the motion picture directors of today, a great many of them at least, still

seem to think that a picture can be made good by throwing a lot of money away on lavish settings, and settings containing a lot of people, even though they fail to regard the personal element of the story in a serious light, even though they fail to make this element convincing and real.

Some of the biggest directors in the business have this idea, strange as it may seem. These fellows, believing themselves secure, take delight in poking fun at Mr. Griffith because he will stop a spectacular scene now and then to show a youngster playing with kittens. Mr. Griffith may have been inclined to pay too much attention to kittens and puppies at one time in his career but he was headed along on the right track and those who laughed at these scenes of his were then and there switched off to the wrong track.

CHAPTER X

SOME OF THE ARTS OF SLAPSTICK COMEDY

THE director of the knock-about comedy grossly neglected in the parcelling out of praise.—The inventive genius of Mack Sennett, king of comedy, and a digression on the "discovery" of Charles Chaplin, prompted by our present day radical and liberal writers

Chapter X

The usual critic of the motion picture is given to prating long and seriously about the art and the business of it with relation to the Griffiths, the De Milles, the Ingrams, the German Ernst Lubitschs and the ordinary whatnots and their dramatic productions, but when approaching the producer of the slapstick-thrill comedy, they seem to forget that this branch of production is an art too and a very high one and one to be taken just as seriously if not more so than the art of dramatic production.

The picture critics of the New York and Boston newspapers, for instance, will sometimes devote a whole column to a review of an ordinary dramatic production and then close with the line: "There is also a Mack Sennett comedy on the bill." Nine times out of ten this comedy so briefly dismissed is more interesting and entertaining than the featured part of the program.

Aside from Charles Chaplin (Chaplin is his own director) the critics don't regard the comedy director in his proper light—often one of high artistic achievement plus a marvelous amount of ingenuity.

To digress for a moment, the case of the critics and the Chaplin comedies amuses the writer and many of his acquaintance immensely. It appears that the critics, commentators and publicists of national and sectional standing have only recently "discovered" Charles Chaplin. The reviewers of the daily newspapers and the magazines now hail each effort of his as masterly,

pointing out virtues in his performances, in his attitude on life and in his inventive genius with remarkable pride. Chaplin has become the "fashion" with those who formerly thought his name a synonym for a vulgar, pie-throwing clown.

It was some seven years ago that a number of motion picture trade critics and myself first saw the comedian doing a "bit" in a Mack Sennett comedy. Somebody said his name was Charles Chapman. Somebody else said it was Chaplain. They thought so. They weren't quite sure who he was. But everyone in that little room knew then that, whoever he was, he was great.

Five years afterwards, as the picture subtitle would say, some of the newspaper critics woke up to the fact that this little man was an artist. And a year later the liberals and radicals of Greenwich Village, New York, and points west, discovered that Mr. Chaplin was somewhat liberal, even radical, politically, and so made the astounding revelation to their worlds that he was a great artist. Perhaps the above is a little unfair but if Mr. Chaplin had voted a straight Republican ticket it is hardly to be supposed that he would have been heralded as such a master of his craft by these people.

But we in the motion pictures knew him in his true colors from the first and so perhaps this little excursion into the realm of jealous back-biting may be pardoned. However we feel somewhat as Columbus, in his grave might feel if Marshall Foch on his recent visit to these shores, should have announced to the world that he had discovered America.

But to get back to the art of the director who makes a good slapstick comedy. The directors such as Mack Sennett and his staff of associates, such as Hal Roach who guides the destinies of the bespectacled Harold Lloyd, and such as Henry Lehrman, who follows blindly but often quite successfully in Mr. Sennett's footsteps. These men, laboring tirelessly on the invention of new "gags," stunts and fooleries for the amusement of the picture public are deserving of immense credit.

"Slapstick" is a term that ill describes the efforts of these men. It is a hangover from the period when motion pictures were "movies" and deserved no better appellation. It suggests, besides the act of employing the old stage slapstick itself, the equally worn trick of throwing custard pies. Strange as it may seem to some whose memory of the old days in the making of pictures overshadows their ability to make observations in the present, pies are seldom used in a comedy studio these days, except in the dining room for purposes of conventional consumption.

The throwing of a pie was ceased long since as a comedy "gag" by the high class slapstick directors. Other "gags" have replaced it. Once in a while it is resorted to, probably just for old times sake but as a rule the comedy directors and those mysterious men of the comedy studio, who can hardly be called scenario writers, men whose inspiration is often the combined effect of phonograph music and bottled spirits, are able to hand out something newer and more amusing than mere pie-throwing.

What appears to be most interesting in the production of these comedies is the amazing machinery at the director's control for the entertainment and the fooling, the funny hocus-pocus fooling, of the picture going public. Mack Sennett's studio on the western coast is probably the best equipped in this way and every mechanical contrivance he employs in the making of his pictures is guarded jealously by him and his staff as a state secret might be guarded. Mr. Sennett doesn't believe in telling people how he performs his tricks. He works on the principle that the public is better satisfied by remaining mystified, of which more anon.

So it is beyond the power of anyone outside of Mr. Sennett's confidence to set down the exact manner in which he causes to be done some of the most amazing stunts on the screen. One can hazard the guess that he makes a comedian appear to be walking on water by double exposure but, given this information, any other director would be hard put to it to do the trick successfully.

Mr. Sennett is often called upon to assist other directors in producing a thrill. Most people well remember Anita Stewart's picture of two or three years ago, "In Old Kentucky." And those who can recall the picture will also be able to recall the scene wherein Miss Stewart, on horseback, urged her steed to jump a yawning chasm, rather wide and terrifyingly deep. It was one of the biggest thrills in the picture and it was made in Mr. Sennett's studio. Neither Miss Stewart, nor Marshall Neilan, who directed all the rest of "In

MACK SENNETT MIXES SITUATIONS LUDICROUSLY. HERE IS A MARRIAGE SERVICE PROCEEDING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

MACK SENNETT NOT ONLY GOES IN FOR "GAGS" WHOLESALE BUT ENDOWS HIS PICTURES WITH A FINE QUALITY OF BURLESQUE. THIS IS A SCENE FROM "DOWN ON THE FARM"

Old Kentucky" had anything to do with this particular scene. It was further said that Mr. Sennett demanded and received a sum equivalent to the yearly salary of the President of the United States, for his contribution to the old melodrama.

A great part of Mr. Sennett's art lies in his inventive genius and his happy faculty of applying some basically sound trick of mechanics to a ridiculous comedy situation. In this respect he proceeds from the same principle that R. L. Goldberg, the cartoonist, does. Those "easy machines" contrived by Goldberg, involved, intricate and ridiculous, that finally end up by scratching a man's back or slapping a mosquito, have as a basis an actual mechanical theory. So with Mr. Sennett. In a recent Ben Turpin picture the comedian appeared as a baker. He was shown "holing" doughnuts with a mechanic's auger and going about his work in a perfectly serious fashion. A little later the subtitle "testing" was flashed on the screen, followed by the scene of the baker testing his doughnuts by slipping them over a bar and chining himself on them.

The effect was utterly ridiculous, uproariously funny. And what was it? Really just an application of sound scientific methods, never funny when applied correctly, but as applied to a bakery more or less of a scream. Mr. Sennett and his staff will startle audiences into fits of laughter time and again by such methods.

While on the subject of Ben Turpin it is only fair to record here that Mack Sennett has never received the credit due him for developing this cross-eyed Romeo. Turpin can be, and has been, quite a tiresome

bore on the screen. He proved it a few years ago by trying to star himself without Mr. Sennett's guiding hand—and he failed. Certainly in his case direction enters into his success largely. Ford Sterling is another who once left Mr. Sennett's guidance to form his own company. But he also came back to the fold.

The tricks of the slapstick producers are numerous. The familiar scene of the automobiles skidding all over a wet pavement is sometimes actually hazardous to those participating but more often it is filmed with a slow camera, the cars also skidding around rather slowly, with the result that the completed picture gives the impression of sheer and utter recklessness. In the Ben Turpin picture already mentioned the comedian endeavored to eat asparagus and just as he would get a tip near his mouth it would curl away like a snake. Of course there are such things as wires and springs.

The element of surprise enters into the making of the modern comedy to a great extent. Harold Lloyd and his director, Hal Roach, employ the method of the surprise laugh to admirable effect. One of the biggest laughs that this comedian has ever been responsible for was brought on by a totally unexpected surprise. He appeared as a youth who sought suicide as a way out of all his troubles. He climbed on the railing of a bridge with a rock hung round his neck and leaped into the water below. The water was only about a foot deep and the youth came to a jarring stop when his feet hit the bottom. The laugh that followed was really to be described as an outburst.

Messrs. Lloyd and Roach probably scorn the tricks

by which scenes can be made to look thrilling, preferring instead to accomplish the actual thrill, more than any other comedy producers. It may be recalled that Mr. Lloyd once caused a variety of heart afflictions by appearing in a picture in which he was seen walking in his sleep on the edge of a high building. Fake? Not a bit of it! The real thing—that is the high building, not the sleep-walking.

All the studios in California confined to the elaborate production of slapstick-thrill comedy have their own hospitals and their own staffs of bonesetters and doctors. And, in order that the public may have its fill of laughs, these hospitals often have their fill of patients.

CHAPTER XI

OTHER TRICKS UP DIRECTORS' SLEEVES

PROVING that the illusion once created by the double exposure has been completely spoiled by giving it so much publicity.—And so the spoiling process is begun on a number of other tricks employed by the director to fool the public

DOUBLE EXPOSURE, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ITS MECHANICS HAVE LONG SINCE BEEN EXPOSED, WAS USED SUCCESSFULLY IN MARY PICKFORD'S "LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY," DIRECTED BY AL GREEN AND JACK PICKFORD

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC WORK IN "THE CONQUERING POWER" WAS ALSO AN ACHIEVEMENT

EVERY SCENE IN "THE CONQUERING POWER" CARRIED SUBTLE SUGGESTION IN ITS VERY ATMOSPHERE

CHAPTER XI

Mack Sennett's principle of keeping the tricks of his studio to himself and not spreading them broadcast through a publicity department and acquainting audiences with the "how" of all his thrill scenes is basically a sound one. It is the principle followed by David Belasco with respect to his stage productions. Mr. Belasco never tells how he achieves a certain effect. P. T. Barnum proceeded on a like principle; that there was "one born every minute" and that everyone of those liked to be fooled.

Mr. Belasco goes even further and strives to prevent his stars from appearing in public. This of course is exactly opposite in view to the motion picture stars' idea of doing things. The more they appear in public, the more that is printed about them, the surer they are of their popularity.

It is a question as to whether audiences would care more for Mary Pickford if they didn't know the size of her shoes, what facial cream she recommends, how much money she makes and how she spends her Sunday afternoons; as to whether they would care more for Constance Talmadge if they didn't know the size of her shoes, what facial cream she recommends, how much money she makes and how she spends her Sunday afternoons; as to whether they would care more for Wallace Reid if they didn't know the size of his shoes, what hair tonic he recommends, how much money he makes and how he spends his Sunday afternoons, it is

a question that can never be answered. But in regard to giving away the mechanics of picture making, whether it is a wise or an unwise course, the question has already been answered.

The pointed reference is to the case of the double exposure. This has been explained so many times (and often explained incorrectly) that now when a scene appears on a theatre screen in which the same player appears twice at one time, you can hear all around you the explanation of how it is done.

As a result of all the publicity given the subject of double exposure its use to create a real illusion has practically passed. Immediately it comes on the screen an audience is snapped out of the story and confronted with the bare and unromantic machinery of picture making.

John will thereupon say to Mary: "Oh, they do that by blinding half of the camera lens and dividing the scene in two. First he plays the part on the left hand side and then—"

"Yes, and then," Mary will say to John, "they turn the camera back and expose the other side of the film while he's playing the other part."

And there you are. All very simple. Easiest thing in the world to explain. But in the meantime Mary and John have lost track of the story, the illusion has been smashed for them and for all the people sitting around them.

Therefore having proven that it is a bad thing to give away the secrets of the director and cameraman and cutter, I will now set down two or three other

secrets of the director and the cameraman and the cutter so that other illusions of yours may be spoiled when you go to the theatre. Consequently, if you desire to retain your illusions refrain from finishing this chapter.

The fight on the edge of a high precipice waged between the hero and the villain of the story is a favorite scene of every director's. It is usually terminated when the hero mustering all his strength, lands on the jaw of the villain and tumbles him off the precipice into the nothingness below.

Now, of course villains are expensive commodities, often calling for five hundred dollars a week and more and no director can afford to let one drop over a cliff now and then just for the sake of a thrill. Furthermore, they are usually happily married with large families and these families would be inclined to feel some venom for the director if he permitted the villains to go over the precipices.

So the following course is decided upon as the next best thing to actually killing the villain. The first part of the rough and tumble fight is gone through in a natural way. Then comes the scene which begins with the hero's rush for the villain and ends with the blow that sends the unfortunate over the cliff. The villain takes his nerve with him and stands on the edge of the cliff and leans as far back as he is able. The hero then places one fist on the villains jaw and allows it to rest there lightly. Then he pulls it back suddenly. The villain follows him back to safety and they proceed to fight in a rough and tumble way again.

But what has the camera been doing all the time?

Ah, the camera has been grinding backwards so that when the above scene is flashed on the screen it looks as if the hero really hit the villain on the jaw. And just at the point where the villain is shown leaning back to the farthest of his ability the film is cut and a dummy likeness of the villain is substituted for the fall, thereby saving the director's reputation and his standing with the real villain's family.

Then there is the close shot of the hero's fist landing with terrific impact on the villain's jaw and sending him sprawling. Naturally no villain really wants to feel the terrific impact of the hero's fist. The two boys may be good friends in real life. So the hero lets his fist fly gently and merely taps his opponent.

But, of course, this wouldn't look realistic on the screen so what does the director do or order the cutter to do? He cuts or orders to be cut every second or every third individual picture from the strip of film that shows the slowly moving fist. As a consequence of this cutting the movement of the fist is given actual speed and finally when the scene is shown on the screen it looks like the real thing!

Of course the old trick of the baby being rescued from the onrushing train in the nick of time or the scene of the automobile just cutting across in front of the thundering express are generally understood. The action is usually taken backwards as in the fight on the edge of the precipice with most satisfactory and thrilling results when shown on the screen frontwards.

And now that I have succeeded in spoiling these illu-

"DISRAELI" IS THE PLAY IN WHICH GEORGE ARLISS WON WIDE FAME. DIRECTED FOR THE SCREEN BY HENRY KOLKER IT STANDS AS THE MOST PERFECT ADAPTATION ON RECORD

WALLY REID IN THE GEORGE FITZMAURICE PRODUCTION OF "PETER IBBETSON"

sions for readers who have not previously had them spoiled, is it any particular wonder why Mack Sennett guards the secrets of his study with a certain amount of jealousy?

Chapter XII

SOME WORDS FROM FRANK BORZAGE

THE director of "Humoresque" and "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," a born creator, an instinctive picture director, believes there is not enough true characterization on the screen today.—Audiences like to see counterparts of themselves on the screen, not highly glorified heroes and heroines, is his theory

Chapter XII

Earlier in these chapters reference was made to the number of capable and skilled men, as yet unproven with respect to the extent of their emotional experience, who were eagerly awaiting the opportunity to step into the limelight with a pictorial masterpiece. In only a little over the last twelve months two such men were given the opportunity and both proved themselves, emerging from their experiences as directors whose names now stand for the best in motion pictures. Of and from one of these men, Rex Ingram, we have already heard.

The other is Frank Borzage who in the short space of a year has given picture audiences "Humoresque" and "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," both artistic and financial successes. Mr. Borzage is obviously a born director, that is a born creator, a born artist. The qualities are to be observed in him merely on a chance conversation. It is easy to see that here is a man with a great groundwork of emotional experience to serve him in his art. And Mr. Borzage is one of those who subscribe to the theory set forth in the first chapter of this book; that without a full background of emotional experience a director can never rise to the heights of his craft.

Mr. Borzage's method of working may not be distinctly individual with him but at least no other director has stated as clearly what he believes to be one of the secrets of making good pictures. Mr. Borzage believes

that behind every face he sees there is some sort of a story. Unable to find out exactly what this story is, he will draw it in part from the face itself. The face will tell him certain things, the rest will be supplied from the imagination.

"Characterization is what makes pictures attractive," Mr. Borzage says, "Sincere, true characterization. There isn't enough of it in the average picture of today. There is too much dealing with the surface things, the superficial things. The majority of directors don't go deep enough into the personalities with which they deal.

"I believe in developing every character, no matter how small, that there is in my story if that development is to prove interesting. And by interesting I don't mean the blood-and-thunder sort of interest. A character doesn't have to have committed a murder or betrayed a friend, or to have won a battle in a war or politics to be interesting. It is the commonplace little things in that character's life that can be thrown up on the screen and made interesting, absorbing, living.

"It is my aim to develop characters on the screen that everyone in an audience will recognize. I want a man to say when he sees a character in one of my pictures, 'Well, that's awfully like Johnny Jones,' or I want him to say, 'Gosh, I did the same thing myself, yesterday.' That is the kind of a character that makes a hit on the screen. A character that everybody recognizes and immediately loves. In every face I see I find a story. It doesn't seem hard. The story is right there lying on top, easily visible. You can take it and

make something real, vital out of it. And by face I don't mean face literally when it comes right down to directing pictures. Then by face I mean the characters in my story.

"So many times even in the best of stories, written by the best of writers and prepared by the best of continuity writers, it seems to me that opportunities have been overlooked for the development of character. It is probably because the majority of authors don't realize the extent to which you can go on the screen in developing a characterization. They are still thinking in terms of the printed page. They don't know quite how to think in pictures.

"And so if a minor character can be developed without crowding plot interest and the important characters (and certainly minor characters can be developed in this fashion) why I always want to do it and do do it.

"Again I say it is in these homely, plain, average characters that there lies the real interest for the majority of audiences. The average picture deals with a hero and heroine who are not average people. They are generally very superior in everything they do. Most producers and directors believe that audiences like such people and no other kind because they have always gone to see them on the screen and continue to do so. These superior people are in the majority of plays and pictures and stories that we see and read.

"But just stop and see where the plain, average character when elevated to the position of importance in a film or a play, has captured the hearts of thousands, millions. I refer to the plays, 'Lightnin',' and 'The

First Year' and to 'Humoresque,' the picture. Here were plain, everyday people, just like all of us and just because they were so like all of us we like them better than we like swashbuckling heroes in modern adventure pictures and entirely too wide-eyed and pretty heroines in pictures supposed to be representing life.

"Of course, a dramatic picture with average people in it is the hardest thing in the world to write. That is, it seems to be from its scarcity. Perhaps though the writers proceed on the idea that audiences want fantastically heroic heroes and heroines because they believe people like to see themselves as they would like to be. This is a sound theory and no doubt is responsible for the popularity of the average picture but I think people really like to see themselves as they are. There are stories, and dramatic stories in real peoples' lives but of course they are hard to find. Its all very well to say that there's drama in the life of the man who delivers the milk and in the lives of those in the apartment next door. It's there all right. But find it! That's what I try to do and that's what I try to do in my pictures. That makes them a little bit different from the usual picture perhaps."

Mr. Borzage's "Humoresque" and his more recent picture from the Cohan play and the Chester stories, "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford" bear silent witness to his ideas on picture making with respect to character development. "Humoresque" contained some of the keenest character studies ever screened. Its first half, dealing with Jewish family life in New York City's

Ghetto was doted with gems of true characterization, recognizable as representing actually the average Jewish family of the east side. Much of this characterization was drawn from the work of the author, Fannie Hurst, and Mr. Borzage is the first to recognize this fact, and much more was supplied by the director himself. The manner in which he built up the character of the Jewish father, for instance, instilling into it the proper amount of sympathy, humor and racial characteristic, is a lasting tribute to its work.

There is an interesting story with respect to "Humoresque" that has often been told. The picture had cost a deal of money and was watched with particular interest by everyone in the studio where it was made from William R. Hearst, down to the merest property man. It was something of an experiment.

When it was finally completed and in readiness to be put before the public the heads of the organization decided not to put it out! They were afraid of it! Why? Well, because it dealt solely with Jewish characters, it didn't contain the ordinary type of motion picture plot, in brief, it was something quite apart from the usual type of picture. Therefore those who stood sponsor for it trembled lest it fail financially and trembled to the point where they decided it shouldn't be released at all.

And then someone spoke up and started to champion the picture. It may have been Mr. Borzage. But whoever it was the picture went into a theatre and from the first performance started to break records. And such has been the case with a number of the best pic-

tures produced. "The Birth of a Nation" and "The Miracle Man" were considered by those supposed to know as failures before they were released. They would never make a penny. And all three of these pictures went out and cleaned up the shekels for their sponsors!

Mr. Borzage has a few words to say on the subject of directing which also stamp him as a man from whom greater successes still are to be expected in the future. "Every type of picture," he says, "whether drama, melodrama, comedy or farce can be treated in the same way with respect to characterization. By this I mean that all such types of pictures are based primarily on the sincerity of their characterizations. If I were making slapstick pictures I would pay just as much attention to characterization as I do now. Look at Chaplin. Characterization, true characterization, is at the bottom of his success. It is what makes his pictures more than mere comedies but masterpieces of picture art.

"As for melodrama, I think it a vastly belittled type of entertainment. Of course the old melodrama, the type disparagingly referred to as "ten, twenty, thirty" contained little merit beside its ability to thrill. Then there was no characterization except that which rose from the situations themselves. Situations created character, true to the rule of melodrama. But today in the pictures we have the old melodramatic situations fitted out decently with true characterizations. Critics are inclined to belittle them and call them cheap. But they don't seem to sense the idea that life is made up largely of melodrama. The most grotesque situations rise

FRANK BORZAGE IN DIRECTING "BACK PAY" STOPS TO GIVE DIRECTIONS TO HIS CAMERAMAN, CHESTER LYONS

FRANK BORZAGE AND THE "HUMORESQUE" COMPANY. THE DIRECTOR IS SEATED ON THE FLOOR. THE LITTLE GIRL IS MIRIAM BATTISTA. THE WOMAN AT THE RIGHT IS VERA GORDON. ALMA RUBENS IS ON THE LEFT WITH GASTON GLASS BY HER CHAIR. DORE DAVIDSON STANDS WITH HIS HANDS FOLDED

every day in life. Read the newspapers, talk with your friends and see if I'm not right. Coincidence runs rife in the life of everyone. And yet when these true to life situations are transferred to the screen they are sometimes laughed down because they are 'melodrama.'

"If this is true then all life is a joke and while some humorists hold to this idea, I am not one of those who believe it so."

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT TEMPO MEANS IN DIRECTING

THE matter of tempo is strictly of the technical side of directing. Edward Dillon explains how comedy pictures can be "made" or "broken" through close attention to this angle of production, or a total disregard of it

Chapter XIII

One of the most important matters concerned with the direction of a picture is that of tempo. Tempo is a term borrowed from the music world but it applies to pictures as accurately as it does to music. Its meaning is simple, of course, but to put it in a more commonplace way it means the "timing," or rather the proper timing of the various episodes that constitute the picture.

The value of proper tempo is at once recognizable with respect to some of the familiar episodes of picture dramas. Anyone can readily realize the value of an ultra-rapid tempo in dealing with a chase episode, either in comedy or in drama, say for instance, when policemen are chasing crooks. Here the motion is speeded up to its greatest possible extent while still keeping within the bounds of realism and probability. Sometimes, as is well known, realism and probability in a chase are far exceeded in burlesque comedies. Likewise, it is just as easy to pick out a typical sequence where slow tempo is demanded; any such sequence as a religious ceremony or an important dramatic denunciation.

To point out one manner in which the tempo of scenes varies in less typical sequences and to point out the value of its variation is, however, a far more difficult thing to do. To the eye of the layman the tempo of a picture may never vary from one end to the other. Subconsciously, however, this variation of the tempo

is in a great part responsible for that person's enjoyment of the entertainment. Just as a chase scene is keyed to the greatest possible tempo and just as a denunciation scene may be keyed to the slowest possible tempo, just so other scenes of varying dramatic calibre should be keyed to rates of tempo of varying and relative importance. Sometimes two sequences may be played together in which there is little more than a hair's breadth in tempo but little as it is it is still there, exercising a subtle effect on the dramatic worth of the picture as it unfolds on the screen.

The director who has this realization of the proper tempo down to something approaching a practical science is the best director. To gauge the value of a certain sequence and then to think it out in minutes and seconds is a task of exceedingly difficult proportions. Then too, there is the circumstance of the speed at which the cameraman is grinding to be considered. A cameraman can manage the tempo of a picture by himself if he knows sufficiently and likewise if he is ignorant of the niceties of his work he may well ruin a picture through lack of proper attention to the timing of his scenes, despite all the efforts of the director.

While it doesn't take any unusual amount of judgment to determine the scenes that should be played in fast tempo, it does take considerable judgment to determine those that should be played in slow tempo. Many directors are inclined to award altogether too much film space (are inclined, in other words, to play in too slow a tempo) scenes of little importance. When a director has erred in this fashion a number of times

in the production of one picture, the results show on the screen in the shape of lost interest on the audience's part. The spectator gets the idea that the picture is padded out with scenes just to fill in, whether this was the aim of the director or not.

Scenes that should be played in a rapid tempo are usually played at their normal gait on the studio stages but when it comes to a scene that is played slowly for the reason of registering a certain strong dramatic point, these scenes are as a rule played a little bit slower than they would normally be presented.

The question of tempo simmers down, therefore, to the question of how skilled the director of the picture is in securing desired effects on the screen. Tempo is so thoroughly a part of a director's manifold duties, a part of almost each and every one, that is, that it is extremely difficult to disassociate it from any of them. In dealing with it, it is impossible to go thoroughly into the subject without saying something on pictorial and dramatic detail, about the ability of the players themselves and about the camera and its master.

But the picture properly timed and keyed is undoubtedly the best picture. The drama that leads up to an inevitable climax that sustains the interest of the spectator through a considerable series of episodes before that climax is reached; the drama that, at the moment of the climax itself, fairly bursts forth on the admiring spectator in all its strength and force, is the drama made with close attention to the tempo of each of its episodes.

Edward Dillon, one of the surest directors of light

comedy in the producing art who received his schooling under such present day masters as D. W. Griffith and Mack Sennett, has a few interesting words to say with respect to the topic.

"Tempo, the gauging of scenes and sequences to their proper time can almost make or break a picture," he says. "This fact is specially true with respect to the light comedy or the comedy-drama. Audiences as a whole, I don't suppose, can properly realize how much the proper tempo means in the success of a comedy. In my experience in producing comedies I have often noticed that the slightest variation from the proper tempo in one direction or the other, often spoils the effect of a possible laugh. A slight slowing down in tempo may throw an entire comedy sequence out of gear, so to speak, and irreparably weaken its effect on the screen. Too much speed in the wrong place often has the same more or less disastrous results.

"A player can spoil a dramatic or comedy effect by taking too much time to walk out of a room or going out of it too quickly. He can spoil it by allowing the expression of his face to change too quickly or too slowly. These instances are practical examples of what tempo means. A director has to watch his players constantly in order to prevent such slips. They demand particularly close watching when they are not experienced in pictures, say when they have been recruited from the legitimate stage.

"If anyone seeks an actual demonstration of what the lack of attention to tempo means to a picture, let him go to see one of the various cheap slap-stick comedies so

often produced. He can find them by steering clear of the theatres that show the well known comedy brands produced by the leading producers. When he finds one of the others he will immediately know it because he will see the familiar old chase scenes done in rank, amateurish style. The people in the chase will go fast in one scene and slow in the next. The director didn't know how to achieve the effect he wanted. He probably thought doing a chase picture was the mere job of telling one bunch of people to chase another bunch of people. And that is far from all of it."

All of which is but one more reason why directing motion pictures isn't the easiest thing under the sun.

CHAPTER XIV

"OVERSHOOTING"—AND THE SERIAL

LACK of proper attention to tempo often results in a director finding himself at a loss when it comes to cutting his picture.—The severe task faced by the director of the two reel episode serial and how he must make every foot of film count

FRANK BORZAGE TALKING OVER A DOMESTIC SCENE WITH SEENA OWEN AND J. BARNEY SHERRY. THE PICTURE IS "BACK PAY"

FRANK BORZAGE DIRECTING "HUMORESQUE." THE DICTAPHONE WAS USED BY MR. BORZAGE TO RECORD THE COMPLETE CONTINUITY INSTEAD OF HAVING THE MANUSCRIPT HOLDER USE STENOGRAPHIC NOTES

THE TYPES IN FRANK BORZAGE'S "GET RICH QUICK WALLINGFORD" ARE RECOGNIZABLE TO ALL

Chapter XIV

Tempo is such an intricate subject that the more that is said of it, the more it obtrudes itself on the matter of directing. If a director isn't careful, watching the progress of the various episodes of his picture and measuring their importance and actual length in his mind's eye, he is liable to have too much material on hand when he comes to the task of "cutting" his picture.

The cutting and the editing of a picture present together one of the most difficult processes through which it goes before reaching the public. And while cutting and editing are not exactly part of a director's duties, he exercises a certain amount of supervision over the process because in it his work is finished off and polished.

The cutting and editing of scenes is the process of putting them together in the proper sequences and trimming off unnecessary footage so that the picture approaches the proper length. Skilled cutting and editing, carrying with it a careful appreciation of the director's work, can sometimes redeem a picture that seems hopelessly bad. Likewise lack of skill and appreciation in the cutting and editing process sometimes "kills" a picture.

But when a director has failed to properly gauge the tempo of the various sequences that go to make up a picture, there is all sorts of trouble when the finishing off and polishing process is started. The director may

have allowed too much space for each of his episodes and thus when the editing starts, the director or the editor finds it next to impossible to bring the picture down to the required length without mutilating the whole.

Of course, the ideal state of affairs would be to permit the picture to run its natural length. Then there would be no trouble at all about directors' over-shooting. However, this would lead to pictures being unnecessarily long as there would always be directors who would abuse such a privilege. The length of the average feature is, however, elastic enough to permit a director to err a thousand feet or so in his judgment as to the length of a story and still be safe. Feature pictures run anywhere from forty-five hundred feet to six thousand feet. The average length is five thousand feet, hence the term "five reeler."

And most stories can be told easily enough within the average five reels. There is one critic who claims that no story is big enough to consume more than five reels of film. He is pretty nearly right, at that.

But with all these footages known before hand there are directors who will so misjudge the tempo of the picture sequences and who will so misjudge the importance of sequences and include in them more scenes than are necessary (these directors are usually the ones who work without a continuity), that when they have finished with the camera work on a picture, they find themselves with too much footage on hand and forced into the necessity of cutting out much of the story value of their picture.

One of the most artistic pictures produced during the last year, a picture adapted from a brace of novels of universal fame was to a certain extent, spoiled because the director "overshot" various phases of the story. When he had cut it as much as he was able, when he had brought it down to ten thousand feet, it was quite perfect. And he was unable to cut it down further because each further cut he made on it would have been like sticking a knife in himself and twisting it. It takes more than courage for a director to cut out a scene over which he may have labored for hours at a time.

However, the public, through the theatre owners, has declared itself as generally opposed to pictures taking more than an hour and a half to run unless they provide some remarkably effective sustaining interest. As this picture lacked spectacular quality and was never smashingly dramatic it had to be cut down to average length and in this final cutting much that was good about it was removed and discarded.

Most directors, however, can judge their tempo and their footage to be sure not to run into such trouble. The real difficulty on this score comes when the short two reel picture is made and particularly the serial picture so popular in some theatres today.

In the direction of a serial, each chapter of which is usually told in two thousand feet of film, or two-fifths as much as is allotted the average feature picture, the director is faced with the necessity of making every foot of film contain either plot interest or action interest. Pictorial beauty, characterization, atmosphere,

qualities which sometimes assist the interest of a feature picture to a great extent, are discarded from the slightest comtemplation in the direction of a serial, even as similar elements are discarded in the writing of the magazine serial story.

So it is in the production of the ever-popular rapid-fire, thrill serial that the matter of tempo is of the utmost importance to the director. If he takes a little too long in picturizing a certain sequence, where does he stand? He can't resort to the practice of the feature director, that is cutting out a few scenes here and there that he may have included for their pictorial quality or for their atmosphere. He can't do this because he has excluded those scenes in the first place. Every foot of his film is given over to plot and action interest. So it may be seen that this question of tempo enters importantly into the director's work.

Incidentally the serial director's job is an exceedingly difficult one. Often in the two reels allowed him he must tell as much if not more story than is usually told in the five reel feature. He must constantly keep the action going at a break-neck speed. He can seldom let a player stand still for the short space of a half minute. Everyone is constantly on the move. The plot and the action demand it. The characters of the story must be characterized by plot and action. There is no space for the human touches and the characterization by little details. Not in a motion picture serial.

In addition much of the serial's action proceeds at an extraordinary rate of speed. The rate is hardly natural at all. The director must adapt himself to

this strictly serial way of doing things. This ultra-speed is particularly noticeable when it comes to the big thrill, the big punch scene which usually closes an episode of a serial. Here the action assumes almost lightning like rapidity. The director must force his players to the limit of their capacity for speed. If in his scenes of plot interest there was not a half minute to be lost here in these scenes there is not a half second to be lost.

The serial director works down to the line and doesn't allow himself much to spare on one side of it or the other. So, it may be seen, if he isn't a good judge of tempo he is liable to find himself in the very deuce of a mix when he comes to cut and edit his episodes. If he has allowed too much film for a certain incident there usually isn't much to do but cut the entire incident out and cover the hole with a subtitle. If, by any chance, he has not allowed enough space for his action, the episode appears hurried, awkward, jumbled, hard to follow. And if he has slowed some scenes down a bit so that he will have the proper footage when it comes to this cutting and editing, his audiences will jump on him for trying to "pad out" the picture.

So, difficult as is the task that confronts the director of the five reel dramatic or humorous subject, the task that confronts the director of the serial must needs be set down as more difficult still. The only reason why the serial director is not given greater position in this volume is that the demands of his audiences and the limitations of his footage, permit him to attempt

little that is regarded in a serious way by audiences of taste and discrimination.

The average feature picture can be summed up on its merits on the day that it is shown but, "features may come and features may go, but serials run on forever" and consequently no one can attempt to sum up a serial in one sitting.

CHAPTER XV

THE METHOD OF THOMAS H. INCE

A SURVEY of the Ince method of production with due realization of the fact that he stakes everything on the picture continuity.—Proof of his success and a few of the reasons for it with an anecdote about a certain director who wouldn't play ball with Mr. Ince

Chapter XV

As a general rule there is no love lost between directors and scenario writers. This is particularly the case in the big producing companies where directors work more or less on a schedule, an elastic schedule to be sure, but nevertheless a schedule. In these companies a director seldom has a chance to co-operate with the scenario writer on the construction of a continuity. Sometimes he has complaints on it which are never taken up and discussed due to lack of time. As a result the director blames the scenario writer for the mistakes in the finished picture.

With the case of the directors who have proven themselves in an artistic way, it will be found that the majority of them have much to say about the handling of their stories in continuity form. They either actually co-operate on the writing of the continuity from which they are to work or they claim to discard continuities altogether and work from notes, a brief synopsis or—from the head.

Both the De Milles have much to say about the writing of continuities from which they work. As a consequence when it comes to the actual task of directing they are dealing with their own ideas. It has been related how D. W. Griffith prefers to work without a continuity and his reasons therefore. Frank Borzage is a champion for the continuity synopsis, a running account of the plot, undivided into scenes. Many other directors prefer this method, dividing

THOMAS H. INCE WATCHING ONE OF HIS COMPANIES AT WORK WHILE THE CAMERAS CLICK MERRILY ABOVE

THE HANDLING OF A GIANT MEGAPHONE IS ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS A DIRECTOR LEARNS. OBSERVE THOMAS H. INCE'S SKILL

their pictures into the desired and natural number of scenes during actual work. All such directors claim that to follow a scene numbered continuity through directly results in a mechanical picture. Like the De Milles they claim that to produce such a picture well, they must also have a hand in the writing of the mechanical continuity.

On the face of it the arguments of these directors seem sound. But it is easy enough to take the other side of the question and riddle the arguments completely. The stand can be taken that the motion picture director performs no other functions than those performed by the stage director. And many and many a stage director has turned out productions of artistic worth by merely following the author's manuscript. Few stage directors decline to direct a Shakespearean production for the reason that they didn't have a hand in the writing of the play.

Which brings up the methods employed by Thomas H. Ince, probably the most successful producing-director in the entire field of motion pictures. Mr. Ince is at the head of a number of producing units. He has a certain number of directors making pictures for him. Over the work of these men he exercises an actual supervision. And when a director works for Mr. Ince he does what Mr. Ince tells him to do.

Mr. Ince is one of the veterans of the picture producing craft. He has developed more stars, perhaps, than any other man in the field today. William S. Hart, Charles Ray, Dorothy Dalton and Louise Glaum are the brightest of those he has brought out. And the

secret of Thomas H. Ince's greatness, whether he admits it himself or not, is the minute attention he pays to the matter of preparing the continuities of the pictures from which his directors work.

Probably Mr. Ince pays more attention to this preparation of a continuity than does any other producer. In his opinion the greater part of the work of producing a picture has been completed when the continuity is in final shape to hand to the director.

Equipped with the power of visualization to a remarkable degree Mr. Ince and his production manager thoroughly scrutinize the continuity when it is handed them by a member of the scenario department. Every point in the story, and every point in its development at the hands of the continuity writer is discusesd. As a rule when the continuity is returned to its author there are a number of alterations and changes to be made. And when these are made Mr. Ince goes over the script again. Sometimes this interchange of ideas is carried on between Mr. Ince and his scenario department for six or eight times before the continuity is in final shape for the director.

Then when the director finally does receive the manuscript he finds some such order as this stamped across its face: "Produce this exactly as written!" This, however, is not the arbitrary demand of an autocrat. If the director sees a place where a change will work some good to the story he has the privilege of placing the matter before Mr. Ince himself. But for the most part the Ince continuities are so thoroughly gone over before placing them in the hands of the directors that

few if any changes for the better suggest themselves.

Therefore when the Ince director starts to work on the picture he is carrying out the ideas of the continuity writer and his chief to the most minute detail. His is the business of directing the picture, not of creating it in the broadest sense of the words.

Now according to other directors who insist that such a method of procedure produces mechanical results, is responsible for a work lacking in inspiration and all the finer qualities that go to make a picture, and degrades the director into the position of a mere clerk, Mr. Ince's pictures would be the worst the art has to offer. The fact that they are the most consistently meritorious that the art has to offer would seem to refute the arguments brought up by these others completely.

So what is the answer? Griffith produces good pictures after his method. Borzage and a number of others produce good pictures after the same methods, or methods practically the same. And Mr. Ince, hands his director a continuity divided strictly into scenes, each camera angle is numbered and for a purpose, for the director to go out and make all these camera angles, these scenes, just as Mr. Ince ordered him to.

The answer is, after all, quite simple. Mr. Ince has capabilities matched by no other director in the producing art. One of his capabilities may be matched here and there but never all of them by another individual. Thus Mr. Ince and his scenario department are the creators of Ince pictures. The directors he employs carry out his ideas. And these directors, while

the above argument may prove them mere automatons, are in reality skilled men, artists for the most part, versed in all the niceties of picture producing. The fact that the majority of them, when they have left Mr. Ince's fold, have succeeded on their own separate accounts, is proof of that.

The matter, therefore, simmers down to this simple problem. Can a producing organization turn out better pictures than an individual director? The solution of the problem is in the following qualified statement: Yes, when the producing organization is headed by Thomas H. Ince.

Mr. Ince's qualifications for such leadership are manifold. To begin with, he is, naturally, a born leader of men. If chance had led him into the business world instead of the art of motion picture producing he might well be a bank director or a railroad official. He would know his business thoroughly whatever it was and then would proceed with the utmost confidence in his own knowledge. Of course he would make mistakes even as he has made some few mistakes in picture producing but more often the reverse from mistakes would be the case.

Anyone familiar with Mr. Ince will talk for hours on his magnetic personality. It is a personality that few, if any, seem able to resist. Thus he is able to give orders and have them carried out to the letter without giving offense. It seems that giving orders without accompanying them by a modicum of offense is a pretty hard thing to do. Dozens of men in the

craft of picture producing would trade almost anything they've got for this ability of Mr. Ince's.

On top of these qualities, invaluable from whatever angle of business or art that they are approached is Mr. Ince's thorough knowledge of making pictures. This knowledge is not confined to one department of production, nor does he specialize in a single department of production. He is conversant with every department and is able to consider each one in its proper light, to value it properly, particularly with its relation to the others.

Still there are the individualists that oppose Mr. Ince and belittle his methods. He doesn't bother about them often as he employs directors who are willing to work into his scheme of production and these for the most part have been richly rewarded.

There is an interesting story in connection with one individualistic director, whose name shall be kept a secret for his own sake, and the Ince organization. It appears that Mr. Ince had signed this director to a contract without inquiring into his willingness to work along the prescribed Ince lines.

The continuity of a comedy-drama was handed him shortly after his arrival at the studio and he was told that everything was in readiness for him to begin work.

The director read the continuity and addressed himself to Mr. Ince somewhat as follows: "You don't expect me to produce this, do you? Why this continuity is so bad that it couldn't possibly turn out to be a good picture. I won't make it!"

Mr. Ince, with the director's name fastened on the

end of a contract, is alleged to have replied with a certain degree of forcefulness: "You will produce it."

The argument went back and forth. The director wanted to work but he didn't want to work in the Ince manner. Mr. Ince's pride and temper were undoubtedly stirred and he insisted that the director produce the picture along the lines prescribed by him.

Finally an agreement was reached. The director condescended to produce the picture on condition that when it was produced his name was to be left off it as director. Mr. Ince acceded to this demand.

To do the director credit he then went about his work sincerely. Mr. Ince watched him carefully and realized that he was doing his best, though still believing the cause was hopeless. The director, when he finished work, was dismissed from whatever further terms were contained in the contract.

And so the picture was put before the public without the individualistic director's name upon it. It was one of the most successful pictures ever released. It was an irresistable comedy-drama and everyone who saw it fairly revelled in it.

The director when he realized how he had talked himself out of credit for one of the art's best pictures must have fretted and fumed considerably. Equally galling must have been the large advertising bills he received for pointing out the fact to the motion picture trade in large announcements that he had directed the picture. For Mr. Ince had lived up to the agreement to the letter. He had not only left the director's

name off the picture but had removed it from all advertising as well.

Mr. Ince had his little joke.

And probably the director doesn't care much now anyway. He is a success with another company and is still saying that he can't make good pictures from a continuity on which he didn't work himself.

CHAPTER XVI

DIRECTORS SCHOOLED BY INCE

A PARTIAL list of directors schooled under Thomas H. Ince who have made successes as individualists elsewhere and who, because of their successes, are actual refutations of the argument that Mr. Ince turns out mere picture mechanics and carpenters, not artistic creators

THOMAS H. INCE, AMONG HIS OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CAN SHOW AN ACTOR HOW TO PERFORM IN A SCENE AND OFTEN DOES

MARY PICKFORD'S VERSION OF "LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY" IS A CREDITABLE VERSION OF THE FAMOUS STORY. THE ATMOSPHERE COMMUNICATED TO THE VARIOUS SCENES BY THE DIRECTOR, PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE PICTURE'S SUCCESS

Chapter XVI

Those who cry down the methods employed by Thomas H. Ince with respect to the directors who work in his studio often state that the Ince school of directing snuffs out any original ideas that a director may possess and makes him a mere picture mechanic, capable only of turning out mechanical and uninteresting pictures.

And lest it be thought that sufficient proof hasn't been offered to counteract this argument some few of the directors who started under the early Ince regime and left to make their marks as individualists elsewhere are mentioned here.

There is Reginald Barker, long on the Ince staff, who until recently was employed at the Goldwyn studios and who was entrusted with the direction of many of their most important stories and stars. The facts and records point to only one conclusion, that Mr. Barker has directed some of the most successful pictures made by the Goldwyn company and is one of the most reliable men in the field today.

There is Fred Niblo who after a short session at the Ince studio turned his energy elsewhere. Mr. Niblo happens to be the man who directed Douglas Fairbanks in the highly successful "Three Musketeers." No one, within or without the field of motion pictures, has once stated that "The Three Musketeers" appears to be the work of an automaton.

There is R. William Neill, who, since he left the

Ince school some several years ago has been hard put to it to accept all the positions he has had offered him. Other picture producers are not in the habit of seeking a man to fill the responsible position of director when he can only carry out the definite orders of his superior.

There is Jerome Storm who while with the Ince organization made a big name for himself by directing many of the pictures in which Charles Ray appeared. Mr. Storm left Mr. Ince when Mr. Ray left him. Mr. Storm directed Mr. Ray's first independent picture. Mr. Ray, since he has been directing his own pictures, shows sadly the lack of Mr. Storm's guiding hand. And Mr. Storm has had various positions since leaving Mr. Ray—in fact, has had quite as many as he could well take care of.

There is Victor Shertzinger who while with Mr. Ince also made some very good Charles Ray pictures. With the Goldwyn company he made an enviable reputation for himself as a director of light comedy and proved more successful in handling Mabel Normand than any other director with the sole exception of Mack Sennett himself. Mr. Shertzinger is now at the head of his own producing company. A difficult post for a man to achieve who is no more than a mere mechanic taking orders from a producing genius such as Mr. Ince!

There is Lambert Hillyer, who with this writing is back with Mr. Ince after several years in the service of William S. Hart, directing and writing the majority of that star's pictures. Mr. Hart would hardly pick a mechanical nincompoop to direct his screen efforts

which are considerably important both to Mr. Hart and the public at large.

There is Frank Borzage himself who was with Mr. Ince a long time as an actor and who had ample opportunity to absorb his system of directing. And Mr. Borzage, as has been previously stated, is quite a worthy director.

There is Roland Lee, one of the younger directors, developed by Mr. Ince who only recently left him and who immediately made a name for himself directing some Hobart Bosworth pictures and who at this writing is with the Goldwyn company handling the directorial end of some of that company's most important pictures.

This is an array of directors rather difficult to match. And if it was tried to match it from a list of directors turned out by any other producing-director or any other producing organization, the poor fellow who tried would find himself in for a life's job.

To work in the Ince school of directing is, indeed, the luckiest thing that can befall a director. Instead of making him an insignificant employe, merely carrying out the work mapped out by the man higher up, it teaches him thoroughly all branches of picture directing so that when he strikes out for himself he is far better able to approach the excellence achieved by his former superior than he would be without such schooling.

CHAPTER XVII

WHO CREATES A PICTURE?

WHEREIN it is shown that the continuity writer and not the director is the actual creator of the motion picture in its motion picture form.—Proof is offered by the directors themselves who, perhaps unwittingly, have previously shown that the continuity writer is the beginning of everything in the studio

CHAPTER XVII

So much dicussion has been set down in these pages regarding the results obtained when a director prepares his own continuity or when he works without a continuity in his hand; and it has been explained that a large number of directors produce the best results when they collaborate with their continuity writers, that the question naturally arises as to who is the actual creator of the motion pictures seen on the theatre screens. Is the director the creator? Or is the continuity writer the creator?

This is a question that can't be answered without giving immeasurable offense to the one group of artists or the other. Every director will publicly announce that he and his fellows are the creators. And every continuity writer will announce the same thing. Having had considerable experience in the continuity line and never having directed a picture, I will probably be accused of bias when I side with the writing men. However, the facts of the case seem to point solely to the conclusion that the writers are the creators. The very directors who decline to follow a written continuity in their work give particular significance to this statement.

It has been shown that D. W. Griffith and a number of his lesser disciples decline to use a continuity on the ground that it cramps their originality. They can't make a good picture following another man's continuity. What better answer could be found than that

in answer of the question, "Who is the creator of a picture?"

Both the De Milles are frank with the statement that they work long and arduously over the preparation of their continuities. Then there is Thomas H. Ince's method which, as explained, stresses the importance of the continuity above all else. It appears to be plain, therefore, that the continuity is generally regarded as the beginning of everything with respect to the motion picture. Of course, the original story comes first of all and is vastly the most important matter for consideration. But the original, as a general rule, is not a picture story. From the original story the continuity writer creates the picture.

The continuity writer thinks in pictures. If he is efficient he is able to visualize his work as he goes along. When he has finished his task he has a completed picture in his mind. And if his continuity is a perfect work he has a completed picture on paper. And, still further, if the director is capable of visualizing, he discerns this completed picture that lies before him on paper and proceeds to transfer it to the celluloid.

The man who carries out the plans for the construction of a giant building or of a subway, the man who does the actual building of a great ship or the man who directs a picture, are not the creators of their work. The creators are the men who draw up the plans.

The reason why directors claim that they can't get the best results working with another man's continuity is that they realize that directing has its limitations.

To actually create they must invade the field of creation. And so the Griffiths and the De Milles invade the continuity writers' field and do creating on their own accounts. And some of them, of course, are creators of excellence.

Then, these matters granted, why bother about the continuity writer, it may be asked. Without going to the defense of these greatly abused fellows it may be emphatically stated that without the continuity writer the directors would find their work greatly deteriorating. In the field of production today there are certain directors who insist on doing their own continuities, who refuse even the slightest assistance or suggestion from an outside source. Many of these men grow "stale" in their work and turn out uninspired and mechanical pictures. They "live" with a picture too long. They get to know it so well that they slight it. They know it so well that they think everyone else is on the same familiar footing with it. They see it through their own eyes only and they see it through colored glasses that obligingly obliterate all its faults and intensify its merits. These men won't let anyone touch one of their pictures in any process of production. They even insist on doing the actual cutting and editing of the film and the writing of the subtitles. Their work is, as a rule, artless, tedious to watch and flat in the majority of effects striven for.

This condemnation of the man who combines both the arts of writing for the screen and directing is not to be taken without exception. The rule is like every

other rule and wouldn't be a rule unless there were here and there an exception to it.

So, instead of a creator the motion picture director really finds himself in the same position occupied by the man who sets out to translate a book from one language into another. The work has already been created and lies before him needing only his deft touch to recreate it through a different medium than type. Recreate seems to be the proper word. Deprived of the privilege of calling himself a creator, a director can at last call himself a recreator.

And when a director proceeds to translate a work of his own from type to picture form he is filling both positions. However, the fact that he is creating in one of his capacities, doesn't mean that he is creating in the other as well.

This sudden depriving of the director of all award in the creation of a motion picture and handing it to the screen writer may not seem at all just. There are directors who will say that such a claim is ridiculous, who will say that a continuity writer cannot possibly be the creator of a picture because he doesn't know the exact topography of the exterior location or setting to be used as background for the scene, who will say that there are hundreds of times when little pieces of "business" suggest themselves on the moment to the director.

These and dozens of other arguments will be advanced to riddle the statement that the continuity writer is the creator. But the statement will still stand as a fact. The slight changes necessitated when an

THE JEWISH TYPES IN FRANK BORZAGE'S "HUMORESQUE" HAVE BECOME WORLD RENOWNED

"DISRAELI," DIRECTED BY HENRY KOLKER, IS ONE OF THE MOST PERFECTLY MADE PICTURES FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE PRODUCING ART

exterior location presents some unusual topography never seriously change the plot of the picture. The business introduced, if it is good business, enriches the plot so much the more. Then if the director wishes he may designate himself as a decorator in addition to a recreator.

But despite all these words that seem to detract from the glory of the director, his work remains a high art, tremendous and difficult to master. His task of translating from the printed page to the strips of film is no child's play by any manner of means. To accomplish this work he must bring into play all his talents, his experience, his level-headedness, his judgment of story values, his ability to handle people, his knowledge of dramatic construction and so on and so forth. If he hasn't many talents he is liable to keenly feel the lack of them before he has progressed far on his work.

The fact that the average director refers to his continuity or rather somebody else's continuity to guide him is no reflection on his own ability. It produces proper balance in the work of picture making and the director knows it. He knows too that the art of picture making is no exception to the old rule that two heads are better than one.

The best scheme of things and one which is followed in many studios today is to have a director and a continuity writer work hand in hand not only on the construction of the picture story but also on the director's end of it—the writer acting in the capacity of supervisor and advisor to the director. This method of

procedure has produced some of the best pictures recently made.

It would be ideal if human nature in general didn't contain those qualities which make armies and navies necessary and which make cats and dogs fight.

CHAPTER XVIII

MUSIC IN PICTURE PRODUCTION

THE value of music in inspiring the proper mood in a company of players.—An argument in favor of this aide to the director and the recitation of an occasion where a director went mad

Chapter XVIII

Many directors use music to inspire from their actors and actresses the best performances. The idea is plausible and often productive of the desired results. Often, too, it is carried to extremes. There is one quite famous star who needs "Hearts and Flowers" rendered in the slowest pitch of melancholy, to satisfactorily walk across a setting. She doesn't register any deep emotion in this instance either, unless walking can be so termed.

It was some time in the year 1914 that music was discovered as one of the director's chief aides. A large ballroom scene was being photographed at the old Thanhauser studio in New Rochelle. Invitations were sent to members of the press to attend and watch the work. A rare innovation was promised. The innovation turned out to be the fact that the ballroom dancers actually danced to the strains of an orchestra! Previously picture dancers had been forced to rely on their own sense of rhythm.

Since then musicians have grown to be almost as vital in picture making as the cameraman or the actors themselves. At the studios in the early morning appear almost as many men carrying violin cases as there are with make-up boxes.

The idea isn't at all as far-fetched as it may sound. Music, more than all the advice and coaching that a director may give his company, serves to cast them in the proper mood for a scene. National folk dances and folk songs offer proof of this. It is a familiar sight

to see members of Latin and Slavic nations, stirred to the very depths of their souls by the familiar notes of some ancient folk song or dance. It will inspire them to forget their surroundings and break into abandoned action.

Thus, when an actor or an actress is called upon to do a particularly pathetic and emotional scene upon the screen, the proper accompaniment from musicians assists the player in striking the right note in the performance. There are comedians, too, who employ musical inspiration. However, when they are playing a burlesque scene they often call for the slow, tearful music that is used for the serious scene. It gives them a better slant on the burlesque element in the scene.

Probably the director first conceived the idea of using music in the making of his pictures from the fact that it is used to such great success in the presentation of the completed picture to the public. Sometimes the difference in effect in seeing a picture in the bare projection room of a studio and then watching it shown in a theatre to a full orchestral accompaniment is startling. So, rightly argued the director, if music can be employed to such benefit in the exhibition of a picture, it can be employed to equal benefit in the production of it.

In a studio where two or three companies are working at the same time it must be confessed that the effect of the various orchestras is more or less confusing. The actors and actresses would be doing quite the right thing if they went altogether insane. I was in a large studio in the west only recently when a cabaret scene

was being filmed on one set to the wildest of jazz tunes. Immediately to one side of it there was a subduedly lighted church scene, wherein hero and heroine were, for purposes of pictures, going through the marriage ceremony. The man who was playing the little melodian for this scene was having a furious time trying to make himself heard above the ten piece jazz band only a few feet away.

The director of the church scene finally decided to await the time when the director of the cabaret scene paused between "takes" of his picture. He thought he had hit the right moment and was half way through his quiet marriage when "zim-boom-bang" the jazzers were at it again.

The last I saw of the poor church director he was learning the latest dance steps from the actor who played the minister.

Yes, many motion picture directors turn gray prematurely.

CHAPTER XIX

JUST SUPPOSE

DO you actually know what you could be up against if tomorrow you were given the opportunity to direct a picture? What do you know about light, camera angles, makeup, exits and entrances? Could you successfully dominate the stage before a company of wise professionals?

Chapter XIX

Practically anyone who has given any thought, whether serious or not, to picture production, thinks deep down in his heart that he could direct just as well if not better than the fellows that are directing. In like manner, when his fancy turns in the direction of writing for the screen, he is certain that he could write a better photoplay than the "creatures of luck" who are writing photoplays. This, of course, is human nature and can never be changed.

But just suppose, for the sake of argument, that you reader (you representing in this instance one of those everyones who knows he can direct as well if not better than the next fellow); just suppose you are given your opportunity to direct. Just suppose that tomorrow morning you are to start your first picture. You have read your continuity over and again, you have assembled your cast, you have seen to it that the first setting constructed in the studio is to your liking. Tomorrow you begin work on actual production.

You arrive at the studio at nine o'clock (for directors have to keep hours like everyone else, you know) and you step briskly out of your limousine and proceed to your office, where, after divesting yourself of outer garments, you read again the scenes you are to begin work upon. Following this you step briskly upon the studio stage and find your company waiting for you (providing, of course, that the star hasn't decided to

A RACE TRACK SCENE IN "TURN TO THE RIGHT," DIRECTED BY REX INGRAM

REX INGRAM DIRECTING A "BIT" OF "THE FOUR HORSEMEN." THE WHITE CANVAS SQUARE IS A REFLECTOR, USED IN EXTERIOR SCENES TO GIVE THE PLAYERS THE FULL BENEFIT OF THE SUNLIGHT

THOMAS MEIGHAN AND "ALL HANDS AND FEET" IN THE SCENE FROM "CAPPY RICKS" WHEREIN THE LATTER PROFESSED HIS IGNORANCE OF THE CORRECT MANNER IN WHICH TO FALL DOWN

become temperamental and be an hour late the first morning).

You glance over the setting to see whether everything is ship-shape and in readiness. Perhaps it is and perhaps it isn't. Perhaps dust has accumulated on the library table over night and perhaps again the property boy has forgotten to remove it. (Must a director bother about such little details? Indeed, the director must).

The dust removed you turn your attention to the lights. Are the "banks" in the right place? (Of course, you know that a "bank" is the moving mass of light that is flooded in from the side of the setting). You go into consultation with the cameraman and the chief electrician to determine whether they are in the right place or not. And you mustn't betray any ignorance about the placing of the lights to these men. If you do your standing with them begins diminishing even before you have begun work. Well, the banks are all right. So are the overheads. And the sunlight arc. And are you going to use any of the smaller "spots" to offset your star to the best advantage? These must also be in the right place.

You have made sure then that everything is well with the lights. Thereupon you turn your attention to the camera. The cameraman has been told from what angle you are going to "shoot" the scene first and has "set up" his machine according to his own likes. You study the angle and you visualize just how the scene will look on the film, taken from this angle. You may want the camera a little closer or a little

farther away and so you go into conference with the cameraman and after considerable argument you win your point and the camera is moved. This, of course, necessitates a slight change in the position of the lights again which, of course, you attend to.

Then finally you come to the consideration of the players themselves. You know all about make-up, of course, and you examine the players closely to see whether they know all about it too. Is this fellow who is playing the butler made up properly? Is this girl who is to do the "bit" of the maid all right? No, you decide, she has too much rouge on her lips and not enough mascara about the eyes. You politely inform her of her mistake and beg her to hurry to her dressing room and alter her countenance.

For this interference the maid looks daggers at you and departs. The star strolls restlessly about and looks at you as if to say, "Well, when are you going to begin, anyway?" You look at the union stage hands and realize that while they are standing around here grinning at you they are getting paid for it every minute and their pay is being charged up against your work. And you haven't even started yet and here it is almost eleven o'clock! Still you mustn't become obviously flustered. If you did the whole company would give you a laugh, closely approaching the justly celebrated razz-berry.

The maid returns. She is ready at last so are the others. Now you begin a rehearsal. Your scene calls for the following action.

—maid enters library door and crosses down to telephone. She answers phone. Butler pokes head in door and listens intently as she talks over phone. He is startled out of his position by the appearance of the master of the house back of him. He steps into the room and holds the door open for his master. The maid, realizing that she isn't alone, drops the telephone in confusion, and confronts the master. She makes apologies and exits, followed by the butler while the master of the house looks after her in a quandary.

You explain the parts to the butler and the maid who perhaps are not familiar with the scene. Then you do start. And like as not the first rehearsal will appear impossible to your well-trained eye. The maid and the butler don't act properly. You call a halt in the middle of a scene and explain matters thoroughly to them. The star, playing the master of the house, thinks that you might have explained all this before and plainly shows that state of mind. He is so capable in expressing his innermost thoughts that your sole consolation is the happy thought that he is a fine actor and won't need much direction.

Finally the rehearsal runs smoothly. You then order "lights" and up they all go. And then you order "camera" and your cameraman starts grinding. And then you order "action" and the players start through the scene, every motion of theirs recorded by the all-seeing eye of the camera. To you, the director, standing there watching and prompting now and again, every little fault of the players, every bit of wasted motion, every insignificant gesture, stands out in the shape of a tremendous eyesore. You know they are doing what you told them but still you tell yourself

it could be much better. At length you tell the cameraman to stop in the middle of the scene. The players look up at you as if to say, "Well, what now!" and you step forward and try to explain with the utmost of tact that the maid didn't handle the telephone properly and that the butler didn't listen eagerly enough.

So, despite their frowns, you proceed with the scene again. And this time it is the star who doesn't suit you. He doesn't seem to stop short enough when he comes to the door and he doesn't seem to regard the maid suspiciously enough when she confronts him guiltily. You explain matters, therefore, to the star. Now this star of yours may be a particularly conceited fellow. He may sincerely believe too that he is playing the part as well as it possibly could be played. He listens with something approaching a deaf ear to your patient explanations as to how the part should be played.

And then he flabbergasts you with this remark, "Well, I am doing it the best way I can and I don't get what you mean at all. Suppose you go through the scene for me!" You try to think quickly and wonder what Cecil De Mille or somebody else who doesn't believe in showing a player "how" would act under the circumstances. You are lost and the only course for you to take is to show the star how you think the scene ought to be played.

But can you act? Did you ever try? No matter, you've got to now. So you make a wild stab at the part. Everyone, you know, is standing around watching you. Some actors from another picture may have strolled over to watch you. They linger when they dis-

cover that you are to give an exhibition of acting. You rather have the idea that the entire studio force is out there watching you—and laughing at you.

Following your performance you take the star aside and ask him whether he got the idea. If he is in a condescending mood by that time he may say, "yes," and so you start the scene again. And now the trouble is that you are inclined to believe that anything your players do is the right thing. You are still nervous from the exihibit you just made of yourself and trying hard not to display the symptoms of it to everyone around you.

So you summon up all your courage and direct that scene with all your might and main. It's just got to be good. And when it's been done once it's got to be done a second time (all producers make two negatives, you see, one for domestic use and one for foreign exportation). Inwardly you breathe a sigh of relief when finally that particular scene has been completed and then you want the camera moved up for closeups. (Again, of course you have marked exactly where you want these closeups. And you are ready to tell each player exactly what you want him to do over again for the closeups). And the cameraman busys about setting up his camera for the first closeup and you are just about to start taking it when the lunch hour looms up, the electricians and stage hands leave you flat and you discover that you have to postpone your important work for full sixty minutes.

In the silent and lonely confines of your office you pace the floor and wonder how the afternoon is going

to turn out. You discover that you have spent the whole hour pacing and forgotten to eat. No matter, your appetite was gone anyway and you go back to work, trying to feel ready for any emergency that the afternoon may produce.

And so the day ends. The afternoon reproduces the experiences of the morning with variations. The next day reproduces it further. But if you have gained the confidence of your players and your various assistants and if you have proven to them that you know what to direct and how to direct, the work looms much easier. Every late afternoon after the picture is under way you and your cameraman and your star sit in a dark, silent projecting room and gaze upon the daily "rushes." These are the first prints of the scenes you made the day before. Thus you can see your work grow and thus also your star sees whether he can place full confidence in you. If he discovers that he can, your relations improve as the picture progresses. And after a while you don't even hesitate about getting out there on the "set" and showing him just how to do a thing. He'll like it too.

You have also definitely proved to the cameraman and the head electrician and the assistant director (who knows that he could direct better than you) that you know more about your business than they know about it. You have shown them that you know how to arrange your players in a big scene so as to get the best possible dramatic and artistic effects, you have shown them that you can direct the manipulation of the lights so as to produce a different sort of illusion, you have

shown them, briefly, that you know more about camera work than the cameraman, more about lighting than the electrician, more about acting than the cast, more about composition than the art director, and more about writing than the continuity writer.

You may know deep in your heart that you have bluffed them into believing in your widespread superiority but they don't know it and so the gods of success are beginning to shine on you.

CHAPTER XX

"STEALING" AN EXTERIOR

EXPLAINING how directors sometimes film scenes on busy streets in broad daylight without passers-by becoming aware of the fact.—An amusing incident that arose when one director endeavored to "steal" a succession of rather dramatic scenes

A FRENCH TOWN WAS BUILT FOR "THE FOUR HORSEMEN"
MERELY TO BE DESTROYED

A SCOTCH VILLAGE ON LONG ISLAND! ERECTED FOR "SENTIMENTAL TOMMY," DIRECTED BY JOHN S. ROBERTSON. IT IS A TRIUMPH ARTISTICALLY BUT PROVED A FINANCIAL FAILURE

Chapter XX

One of the most difficult details of production that confronts the director in the ordinary routine of affairs, is that of "stealing" exterior scenes. Those who have consistently attended picture shows are well acquainted with the exterior scenes, the illusion of which is spoiled, by the gaping and laughing spectators on the side lines. And then on occasion a street scene will be found that has been filmed right in the midst of heavy traffic and not one of the many people in the scene as much as award a sly gap to the camera.

This effect of realism is produced when the director goes to the trouble of "stealing" an exterior. In "stealing" the director has his camera "blinded." There are various sorts of blinds used. A taxicab or limousine provide effective blinds. The cameraman can get in with his instrument and shoot the scene going on on the sidewalk and at the same time remain unnoticed before the majority of passersby who would otherwise donate to themselves the roles of spoil-spectators.

Sometimes a truck loaded with packing cases can effectively conceal the cameraman and his instrument at the same time affording an unobstructed focal distance between the camera and the scene to be filmed.

Such scenes require careful rehearsing in the studio before departure for the desired location. Even then, however, the director must rely on the snap-judgment of himself and his players in the actual taking of the scene for it will offer peculiarities and differences of

topography impossible of consideration in the studio rehearsals.

Then again, in these scenes the players must wear either the absolute minimum of makeup to prevent them from being detected as players or, better yet, wear none at all. If the sunlight happens to be right, none is worn as a rule.

Often in these scenes peculiarities arise which are interesting. I recall an exterior scene which a director for one of the large studios in the east endeavored to "steal" in which the action was of considerable importance to the story. The scene was supposed to be night and representing a little traversed residential section of the city.

The action called for the leading man in the case to effect the actions of a man entirely too full of pre-Volstead liquor for his own benefit. In brief, after staggering about a bit, he was to collapse in a heap on the sidewalk. The heroine, coming along at this moment, was called upon to take pity on the poor wretch and take him into her house before which he had fallen.

Just as she succeeded in raising him to his feet a policeman was to come along and question her about the young man's identity. To protect him she was to claim that he was her husband.

To give the whole scene an added touch of realism it was thought that it would be better to have several pedestrians pass the hero by as he lay unconscious on the sidewalk.

The time chosen to take the scene was late afternoon

and a little frequented street was selected for the occasion. A number of people were passing, however, and these, the director thought, could be used in the roles of unconscious extras in the picture.

But the director had miscalculated human nature. The passers-by, unconscious of the presence of a camera in the taxicab, really thought the actor was unfortunately drunk and several stopped to offer assistance. The presence of mind of the actor saved the situation. When two people bent over him and offered assistance, he angrily told them to be on their ways. Thus repulsed they moved on. Of course the hero accepted the assistance of the girl as the 'script called for.

But the general effect of the scene was changed by the interest of the passers-by in the drunken man. It was thought that the majority of folk regarded such figures with antipathy. Instead they were interested.

The actor who was playing the hero explained the matter afterwards. "They weren't so all-fired concerned and worried about me," he said, "those two fellows that bent over me really wanted to know where I got it."

The last part of the scene was interrupted also. The actor made up as the policeman interfered with the hero and heroine as per the scene but as he was questioning the heroine as to the identity of the young man a real policeman appeared on the scene and questioned the made-up policeman as to his own identity. The masquerading cop told the real article that a

motion picture was being taken and for the love of the director not to look round at the camera.

The policeman sensed the situation and obeyed orders and as a result the scene appeared on the screen as if two policemen had entered into an argument as to what disposition should be made of the drunken man.

Of course, when the scene was done the real policeman was not in the least averse to accepting a slight reward for his good services.

CHAPTER XXI

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ART DIRECTOR

ARTISTS are entering field of motion picture production both as directors and art directors.—Advice of the art director should be sought on exterior scenes.—A few words of Maurice Tourneur

Chapter XXI

Many artists have found the field of motion picture directing exceedingly attractive. The majority of them have entered the new field in the capacity of art directors, planning and supervising the construction and the dressing of the settings. Several others have graduated from such posts to the positions of directors.

Perhaps the artistic side of picture production is the one which had developed less than any of the others. For a long time art directors, interior decorators and artistic designers were unknown elements in a motion picture studio. The early picture public demanded sensation and action. When an interior setting was used furniture was thrown in it indiscriminately. The more, the better. Grand Rapids and Louis IV furnishings were thrown in regardless. An early biblical picture showed the scene of the last supper with the assembled Apostles seated in a variety of modern furniture from the factories of the middle western states.

It is only of comparative recence that real artists and architects have entered the production field. Today all the larger studios have extensive art departments that co-operate with the director and his staff in the preparation of the settings. Accuracy distinguishes the majority of the work of these departments. Errors in period pictures are seldom to be discerned even by the most watchful.

But as yet the art director has failed to put in an appearance where he is needed quite as much as in

the preparation of the interior settings; I refer to the exterior. Beautiful as are many of the exteriors seen in the modern pictures they often lack the proper balance. Any art student could tell you and point out where the composition of many exteriors is faulty.

It is too much to ask that every motion picture director be an art director besides. A man might be perfect as a dramatic director and still be utterly lacking with respect to composition. But if the director cannot be versed in both the arts there should be, and doubtless will be in time, an art director working along with the dramatic director on every scene, interior or exterior.

The former artists now actually directing are few in number. Perhaps the foremost of them all is Maurice Tourneur who came from France several years ago and who was previous to his stage and screen work in that country, a mural decorator. His early productions here attracted widespread interest in the art itself because of the evident touch of an artistic hand. "The Blue Bird" was a triumph from the standpoint of pictorial artistry. So were several others he made at the same time. But they didn't make money. So Mr. Tourneur turned to the production of frankly melodramatic subjects. These he endowed too with all the art at his command and so lifted melodrama to a higher plane than it ever reached before.

Perhaps the fate of Mr. Tourneur's "The Blue Bird" is timely to recall now. Those today who clamor for more artistic and better things on the screen and who opine that no director or producing company has the

courage to attempt such things and who insist that if such things were attempted they would be eagerly received, will do well to heed the pathetic fate of "The Bluebird." The picture director and producer are always willing to strive for something a little finer on the screen but to date the public hasn't given them any appreciable amount of encouragement.

Hugo Ballin and Penhryn Stanlaws are among the artists now directing who have attained prominence in both fields. The latter has made long strides in the short time he has been in a picture studio and gives promise of attaining the same heights in the newer art that he attained in his original line of creative endeavor.

REX INGRAM NEVER LOST TRACK OF HIS PERSONAL STORY IN "THE FOUR HORSEMEN"

PICTORIAL BEAUTY WAS A DIRECTORIAL ACHIEVEMENT DISPLAYED IN "THE FOUR HORSEMEN"

A SCENE FROM "THE FOUR HORSEMEN." HERE IS A STILL THAT ILLUSTRATES REX INGRAM'S ABILITY TO SUGGEST A SITUATION

CHAPTER XXII

DIRECTORIAL CONVENTIONS

IN which the business of slamming directors in general is freely indulged.--Directors have created an array of utterly false conventions by their constant use of them.—A plea for them to stop.—A particular plea for them to stop picking on tobacco

Chapter XXII

Most of the chapters in this book, when dealing specifically with the work of directors, have been keyed in the general tone of praise. The reader might thus absorb the idea that it is thought no room for improvement in the youngest of the arts exists. However, most of the men mentioned in former chapters have consistently worthy records but in case the idea prevails that I believe the millenium in pictures has long since been attained, I hereby dedicate this chapter to a general slamming of every director in the production art. The awful conventions that every director seems to have adopted as his own (the best directors and the worst in one degree or another) are one of the eyesores of modern picture productions.

The little slips in technicalities such as showing a cigar just lighted in one scene and burned to a butt in the next and the paradoxical fact that John exits from one interior wearing a brown derby and enters another wearing a black derby—these little slips which are themselves conventions of oversight, can be left to the motion picture fans who constantly write the papers calling attention to them.

There are more real conventions that, little though they are, have long since become a terrible bore to those who view pictures through eyes at all critical, simply because directors on a whole seem to have adopted these conventions as if they were actually real and part of life. I mean such little things as the ever-

present wall safe in the library setting and the childish and idiotic little dresses with which telephones are clothed. I am not of the socially elect but no friend of mine maintains a wall safe in his library, a safe which, with one good firm wrench properly applied, would leave a gaping cavity in the wall. Neither am I accustomed to visiting ladies' boudoirs but I am firmly convinced that dressing a telephone as a doll is something that simply isn't done in the best regulated families. It is simply and impurely a trick of the "movies."

And no more natural is it for every man to keep a pistol in the top drawer of his desk. I once conducted a surreptitious investigation of the top drawers of various of my friends and could have acquired a miscellaneous collection of everything from old Overholt to scissors without including in it a pistol.

Mention these foolish little conventions to a director and he will enjoy a hearty laugh over them with you. But the very next day he will return to his work of producing a picture and use everyone of these tricks and a whole lot more with never so much as a thought. Fortunately, however, the pistol in the drawer trick has so often been laughed at and down on the screen that most directors are fighting clear of it.

Another convention which seems to grate against people of taste is the habit of directors permitting their property man to pile a breakfast table with dozens of varieties of knives, forks and spoons. The morning breakfast of the newlyweds usually appears on the screen as a parade of fine silverware.

Directors, without number, also choose to ignore the common conventions of gentlemen until, ignoring them to such an extent, they have created an opposite set of conventions to those that actually exist in all social circles of life, the poorest and the richest. Specifically, directors forget to tell their actors to rise when a lady sits at a table and often are at a loss as to the proper thing for a gentleman to do with his hat when talking to a lady.

Then there are the horrible directorial conventions regarding college life. A motion picture college is full of snobs, its dormitories are made up of rooms wall-papered with pennants and peopled with thirty-five year old actors in bulky sweaters who never stir without a pipe with a tremendous bowl and a mandolin or some stringed instrument.

There are, too, the tiresome conventions of the small town with the inevitable and unrealistic rubes. In fact, here the director has taken a figure created for burlesque shows and meant only for burlesque shows and impossible farce comedies and adopted it as a real person, an actual inhabitant of a real small town.

There are, too, the wearisome conventions of western mining camp life as shown on the motion picture screen. Perhaps censor boards and writers have contributed in producing these conventions; chief of which is the fact that every dance hall queen is virtue personified, a Pollyanna in spangles, but they are conventions and unreal ones, nevertheless.

There is the unreal mother of the films. The convention is that if she is a fond and loving mother she

must sit and knit and sit and knit and occasionally wipe away a tear or two. And if she is not represented thus, as fond and motherly, she must be represented as an impossible social climber or a freak feminist on a par with the suffragettes of burlesque shows ten years ago. Normal mothers reach the screen once in a hundred times.

It is granted again that screen writers and censor boards have assisted considerably in building up these false conventions, but the director is the lucky fellow that has it in his power to change them. Let him go about his task gradually if he so wishes, but let him go about it.

Only recently I had cause to give complaint to the practice of directors in identifying cigarettes solely with villains. Some of the screen villains have actually been permitted to reach the point in their careers when the mere manner of toying with a cigarette signifies some specific course of villainy. Their actions with cigarettes are as plain as the old-fashioned moustachioed villain's actions when he strode upon the stage and pronounced "Curses!"

Such a convention is altogether too dangerous besides being funny. The reformers have already begun to associate the cigarette with villainy. And if the directors, through their villains, allow them to go that way, we will soon see the departure of cigarettes from our midst altogether, even as the lamented drink has departed—or is supposed to have departed.

I, for one, am going to blame the directors for such a state of affairs. When a cigarette-legger approaches

me in future years and whispers, "I know where you can get a package of your favorite brand for two dollars," I'm going to hit him and curse the director and his conventions that he wouldn't change even when I thus warned him.

CHAPTER XXIII

ERNST LUBITSCH: GERMAN DIRECTOR

LUBITSCH, on his first visit to American shores, gives some few of his ideas on picture directing.—"Passion," "Deception," and "The Wife of Pharoah" are proof of his skill but he has faults and can afford to absorb much of the technique of the American director.—His discovery of Pola Negri a great stroke

Chapter XXIII

Earlier mention has been made in these pages to German pictures. Lest this term be confusing to those without the picture trade and in the hinterlands, it may be explained that these recently imported pictures are generally advertised as "European pictures," "continental spectacles" or with any blanket descriptive phrase that possibly but not pointedly includes Germany. There seems to be no good cause for refusing to give the spade its proper name today and if there are still those unacquainted with the fact, it can here be announced that "Passion," "Deception," "The Golem," "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," "One Arabian Night," etc., etc., were all produced in Germany.

"Passion" and "Deception," produced under the direction of the man considered Germany's foremost director, Ernst Lubitsch, represent the best in the German art that has yet been extensively shown here in the United States. There is another production, however, "The Indian Tomb," called so temporarily at least, and directed by a gentleman with the unassuming cognomen of Joe May, that is destined to far overshadow anything that Mr. Lubitsch has yet been responsible for. But of this production more anon.

Mr. Lubitsch, as said, has been accorded tremendous praise on this side of the Atlantic. The New York critics swept him up to the plane with D. W. Griffith as soon as "Passion" and "Deception" were publicly shown, and Mr. Lubitsch positively doesn't belong be-

HERE IS THE SCENE FROM CECIL DE MILLE'S "FORBIDDEN FRUIT" THAT AMAZED ERNST LUBITSCH

ELSIE FERGUSON IN THE GEORGE FITZMAURICE PRODUCTION OF "PETER IBBETSON"

side Mr. Griffith, despite the fact that he is a great artist. However and notwithstanding the critics have formed such a habit of awarding fulsome praise to everything that bears the Lubitsch name that the situation is becoming funny. A gentleman in the production department of one of the large film companies recently advanced the thought that the company should release a domestic picture, long considered inferior for the American market, with the name Lubitsch upon it and the line "made in Germany" stamped across its face. No matter how bad it was these counterfeits would assure it of good reviews was the contention.

When the work of Mr. Lubitsch is seriously considered and balanced, the good points and the bad points, the conclusion must inevitably be reached that he is an artistic director, but lacking or rather, to give him the benefit of the doubt, slighting details of production and story, that give every great picture its lasting stamp of individualism. In a previous chapter it was contended that the majority of German directors, in the production of spectacular works, overlooked the personal story in an effort to be awe-inspiring with their mob scenes. In a sense this criticism holds true with Mr. Lubitsch. Details of story mean little to him. In fact, on his first visit to the United States, when interviewed, he expressed amazement over the fact that Cecil De Mille in one of his pictures, "Forbidden Fruit," to be exact, brought out the predicament of the heroine, a social masquerader, by planting in closeups her hesitancy about the selection of the right fork for the various courses of a dinner. Such detail

work, which goes a long way toward humanizing a story no matter how melodramatic the structure of the whole thing may be, is unknown to the German directors of which Mr. Lubitsch is, at the moment, the bright and shining example.

Consequently, it may be asked: How can Mr. Lubitsch be placed beside the American, D. W. Griffith, when in such details Mr. Griffith excels? His latest spectacle, "Orphans of the Storm," is proof again that he is a master of blending the personal story with the spectacular background.

At present, economic situations in Germany permit the production of spectacles there on a scale of lavishness which our American directors could not duplicate without sending their backers into bankruptcy. Labor is so cheap that the most magnificent settings can be erected in the German studios for small sums of money, sums that would be small even if the rate of exchange between Germany and the United States which makes them seem ridiculously small, was more evenly balanced. Thus a new field of effects is open to the German director that is correspondingly being denied the American director by the increasing cost of labor and materials.

Mr. Lubitsch is one of those who has made excellent use of these magnificent settings provided him. He has peopled them with thousands of supernumeraries and he is a born artist when it comes to directing the movements and actions of great groups of people. He manages to get more movement and color into such

scenes than the great majority of American directors have managed to achieve in the past.

So, too, Mr. Lubitsch seems able to extract the maximum ability from his actors and actresses. He was an actor once himself and a good one and, contrary to an opinion, expressed earlier in this book, believes in showing his actors how to play their scenes. Indeed, they are told very little concerning the story but rely for all their inspiration upon Mr. Lubitsch.

In his more serious statements concerning picture directing, Mr. Lubitsch is mostly inclined to point out the faults of pictures and the difficulty of producing them, than to explain what he considers the finer points of directorial technique.

Mr. Lubitsch talked, through an interpreter, about the very weakness of his and others that has just been noted. "So many pictures that promise much in their early stages," he said, "are in the end spoiled by a lack of the proper balance and blending of all the elements that go to make the picture. The work of the author is so often sacrificed for the pictorial effect of the director. The painter (scenic designer) so often has to give way to the importance of the dramatic scene."

All of which is exactly right. The majority of American directors whose work has been considered in this book know just how to achieve proper balance in their pictures. They know where the work of the author ends and that of the scenic artist begins. No director worthy of serious consideration in an American studio today permits his dramatic scenes to be sacrificed to make way for masterpieces of pictorial background.

Nor does he reverse the mistake and sacrifice pictorial background for dramatic scenes or anything else. He knows how to achieve the proper balance.

"I prefer to suggest ideas and situations in my pictures," he continued, "rather than to load down a scene with nothing but the starkly realistic. I prefer my actors, too, to suggest an emotion rather than to register it obviously on the screen."

Here, perhaps, more than in any other direction does Mr. Lubitsch's greatness actually lie. He uses scenes, exteriors, actors to subtly and powerfully suggest an effect, rather than to use the same properties merely to obviously point out such an effect. It is this method, too, that, as has also been pointed out previously, is Rex Ingram's forte. Mr. Lubitsch's art in this direction is exemplified in both "Passion" and "Deception" as well as in "The Loves of Pharaoh," his most recent picture which he brought with him from Germany.

Mr. Lubitsch went on to say, and every other interviewer seized upon his words with enthusiasm, that he only cuts his pictures once. Some remarks have already been recorded on how important a part of picture making is the cutting and editing of the scenes after they have left the director's hands. It has been my privilege to see many of Mr. Lubitsch's pictures as well as a number of other German productions before they have been shown to the American public. The one great fault with those produced by Mr. Lubitsch is that they are far from properly cut and edited.

Hence, I am unable to rush into print to praise Mr. Lubitsch because of his statement that he only cuts his picture once. Rather, I will write here the sound advice that in future he cut his pictures eight, nine or ten times. After Mr. Lubitsch's single cutting of his pictures they run twice too long for the American public. A point which can be successfully communicated to an audience in a quick interchange of closeups by an American director will take Mr. Lubitsch the laborious interchange of ten or a dozen closeups, the last one differing very little from the first one.

The reason for this I am unable to account for. Mr. Lubitsch believes in the art of suggestion as he says. Then why does he drive home a minor point with so many hammers when a little touch from his index finger is sufficient to accomplish his ends? Clearly in these two respects Mr. Lubitsch is a direct contradiction of himself. Does he do this unwittingly or does he do it because his public (the German public) demands to have a point driven home with sledge hammer blows? In the light of no other answer, we must accept the latter conclusion and chalk the matter up against the stupidity of "continental" picture audiences which seems a bit harsh.

These words on Mr. Lubitsch seem so unsatisfactory on second reading that there is an inclination to discard them altogether. In the first place they have the flavor of 100 per cent Americanism, i. e. attacking or waxing unenthusiastic about the work of a German director merely because he is a German director. Which is

not the case at all and for proof of which I ask you to turn quickly to the next chapter.

Mr. Lubitsch has received so much public praise that to go against the tide here can not help but seem purely the inspiration of a pig-head. But then there is no denying that Mr. Lubitsch is a contradiction of himself. He talks about suggestion and then does the sledge-hammer trick, he talks about cutting his pictures once when such a feat is an impossibility.

He is an artist, potentially very great without a doubt, but not as mature as many of his sponsors would have us believe. His tours of the American studios will doubtless have a marked effect on his future productions made abroad. It is to be fondly hoped that he will absorb only the good points of American technique and combine these with the good points of his own technique, discarding the bad points of each set. When he accomplishes this I will line up and sing his praises lustily along with the others who now hail him as a Moses in the bullrushes of picturedom.

But wait! After all Mr. Lubitsch is great. He discovered Pola Negri. Hoch!

CHAPTER XXIV

JOE MAY: GERMAN DIRECTOR

IN which it is pointed out that in three of Mr. May's pictures he displays more qualifications to be heralded as Germany's best artist than Mr. Lubitsch.—"The Indian Tomb" a superfine blending of popular appealing pictorial elements

Chapter XXIV

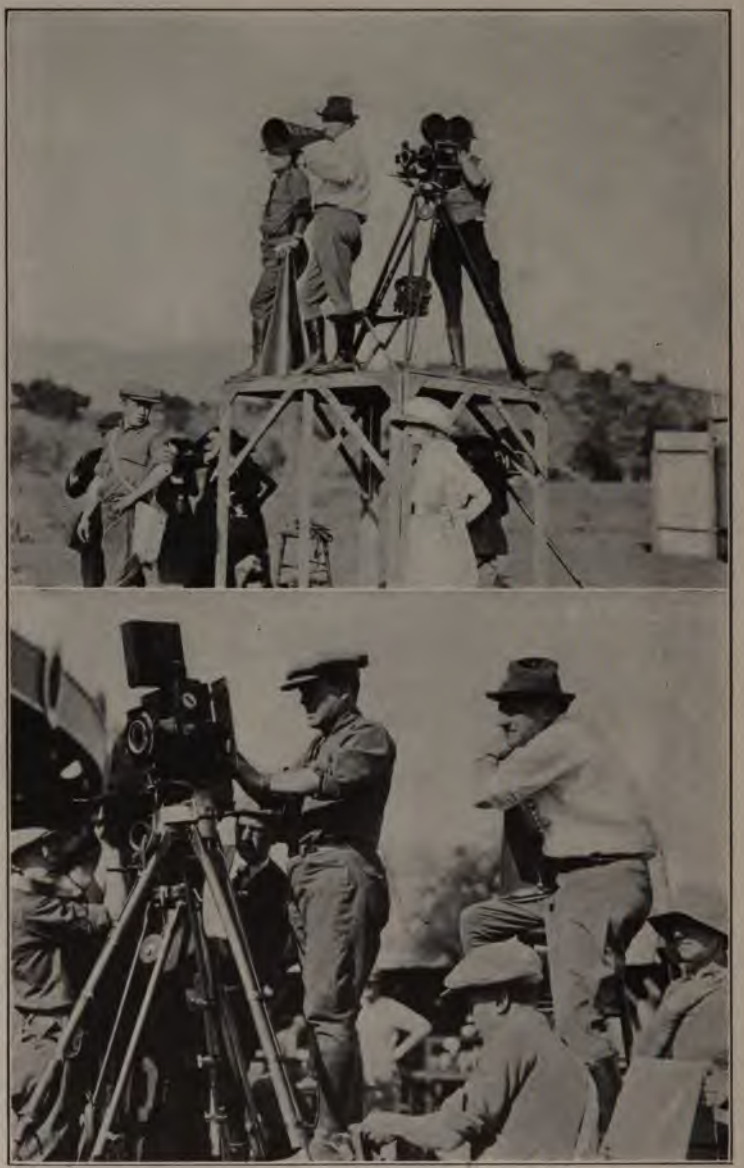
From the standpoint of producing pictures with tremendous popular appeal and at the same time investing them with artistic settings, settings that fairly belie description, and from the standpoint of paying close attention to detail of story and acting, from these standpoints which are all important, Joe May, previously mentioned, "has it," in the vernacular, "all over" Ernst Lubitsch.

Unfortunately, Mr. May had not, at this writing, ventured to American shores. When he does come it is fondly hoped that the same interviewers and critics who scrambled for words from Mr. Lubitsch and considered them as gold will listen to what Mr. May has to say and consider it worth something more than the German mark.

I would have liked to include a first hand interview from Mr. May in this chapter. If I had wirelessed him for his formulae of production he doubtless would have replied in German idiom: "Get a good story and go to it."

To date I have seen three of his pictures, one superbly imagined and mounted mystical drama, "The Indian Tomb," one thrilling serial entitled "The Mistress of the World" and one intense modern society drama at present entitled "Lavinia Morland's Confession." And so I can only form an opinion as to his method of working, of directing his pictures. And this opinion

REX INGRAM CAUGHT IN AN INTERESTING SCENE WHILE DIRECTING THE PRINCIPALS
IN "THE CONQUERING POWER"



CECIL B. DE MILLE DIRECTING

CECIL B. DE MILLE WATCHING A REHEARSAL

is that he embraces in his technique all that is meritorious in the American director's technique, exactly what Ernst Lubitsch should do to honestly earn the fulsome praise that is his.

"The Indian Tomb" is by all odds the most amazing picture that I have ever seen. To begin with, Mr. May had a hand in the adaptation of it. He collaborated on the continuity which is after the generally approved method of the best American directors. He spent no end of time on this work, presumably, for Mr. Lubitsch tells us that all German directors pour over the continuity of their pictures for weeks and months so that finally when they are ready to begin the actual filming of the picture every scene is "fool-proof." This is the method of Thomas H. Ince to the letter.

In the second place, Mr. May must have been given half a dozen billion marks or more to spend on settings. The beautiful Indian settings that are to be seen in the picture, beautiful, magnificent and tremendous could never be built for an American production for less than a million dollars. They greet the eye in such rapid succession that they might be described, in no tones of aspersion, as bewildering.

Mr. May selected an excellent cast. The actors are possibly without reputation in Germany. It is safe to say that none of them with the exception of Mia May, the star, are known broadly. But under Mr. May's direction, each works with a skill so effective that the spectator is nearly obliged to forget there is acting going on before his eye. The Indian Yogi is a commanding, inspiring figure. The Prince breathes pas-

sion, hatred, cunning. The last extra, given a bit to perform, does it with amazing effect.

Mr. May has given in "The Indian Tomb" a marvelous demonstration of what tempo means. The whole tempo of his picture, once the story reaches India is slow—but never tiresome. He seems to have realized that a picture laid in a mystic locale, a locale strange to nearly everyone who frequents picture theatres, a locale enriched in poetry, fiction and song, as a land of uncanny magic, that such a picture demanded a slow, steady tempo. The effect thus achieved strengthens the story ten-fold. Played too fast in one phase or another, hurrying over one sequence to get to another, would have spoiled the magic effect of "The Indian Tomb" completely.

When "The Indian Tomb" first was imported to these shores its length approximated eighteen thousand feet! An unheard of length, to be sure. Of course, it will not reach the American public in such an amount of footage. There is room for cutting, very careful trimming. But even if "The Indian Tomb" was shown here in all its abundance of footage, I doubt very much if it would have proved tiresome except to those with weak eyes. The magic of its story unfolded before a panorama of astounding scenes would hold the interest of the most jaded picture "fan" throughout its entire length.

The Joe May serial, "The Mistress of the World" shown abroad in forty-eight reels has also been cut down considerably for American consumption. It was made quite some time previous to "The Indian Tomb"

and as a work of art cannot be compared with it. However, throughout its various chapters, Mr. May shows the skill which was to attain its fullest flower in "The Indian Tomb." Here again are marvelous settings, here also does he show that he knows the value of tempo, although in achieving it he has often been forced to labor with poor mechanical effects. And here, too, does he know how to secure that awe-inspiring surprise by suddenly showing, unexpectedly but logically, the most amazing glimpses of extravagant, magnificent scenery.

In the modern society drama, "Lavinia Morland's Confession," Mr. May has not bothered about big settings and has discarded the spectacular. And in this entirely different field of picture production he has emerged triumphant again with a gripping, intense drama, related by an accused woman in a crowded court room. Certainly everyone who sees the picture here is going to imagine himself just another spectator in that court.

Those are the three reasons why Mr. May, in my mind, should be placed on a higher pedestal than the much praised Mr. Lubitsch. The latter has shown himself capable of producing spectacles, costume pictures. The former has shown himself capable of producing any sort of a picture—except a comedy. I don't think Mr. May could produce a comedy. His comedy touches in one of his pictures are awful. But there aren't many of them. And he didn't try any in "The Indian Tomb."

Mr. May is a showman and an artist. He knows values. He knows and seems to know full well how to achieve the proper balance in his pictures. He knows detail and uses it to most effective advantage. And above all, he seems to be a natural born picture story teller. He is as much a part of his art as it has been shown that Frank Borzage is a part of his.

Mia May, his wife, is perhaps something about Joe May that American audiences will object to. Mia May is not young. Americans like young and pretty faces. Europeans, including Germans, it is said, again referring to the words of Mr. Lubitsch, tire of a pretty face unless it is accompanied by ability and even prefer a face not quite so pretty and not quite so young if the ability is to be found in it.

CHAPTER XXV

ILLUSTRATING THE USE OF DETAIL

BRINGING just the right amount of detail of story to the screen a rare accomplishment.—"The Law and the Woman" a practical illustration of the injection of the proper proportion

Chapter XXV

The question of detail has come up so often in the discussion of various directors and in their various discussions regarding directing that a few more words are, perhaps, due on the all important matter.

The injection of detail in a story is by right the work of the continuity writer. However, most the directors that have been referred to here, as said, are either their own continuity writers or they exercise such close supervision or collaboration over and on their continuities that here at least the injection of detail is the director's duty. Even when a director follows a continuity closely without having had a hand in its construction he often realizes where detail will help the completed picture due to some peculiarity of setting and location, and so he may inject it of his own accord.

Detail is, without doubt, an element that often distinguishes good pictures from bad. A superfluity of story detail is a bad thing. If a director permits himself to wander off the main track and introduce irrelevant details believing that they have interest in themselves alone, he soon finds trouble getting back to the main track again.

On the other hand, knowing just where a little injection of detail, a little prolongation of this situation or that, will help a story, is a knack or a separate art that is by no means common among directors. To give this exceedingly technical matter a popular light it is best to site an instance where a picture was lifted into

the class of melodramatic masterpieces by the skillful use of it. This instance is represented by "The Law and the Woman," a picture directed by Penrhyn Stanlaws.

This picture is based on the old Clyde Fitch play, "The Woman in the Case." The situation established is this: A woman of no virtue whatever brings evidence to bear against an innocent man who thereupon is tried and convicted of murder and is sentenced to die in the electric chair. The man's wife, convinced of his innocence, enters into the other woman's circle of friends, plays the part of a sister under the skin and ultimately succeeds in forcing a confession from her that frees her husband—at the last minute.

This basic situation is rather old. It has appeared on the screen in various guises from time immemorial. The accused man—the last minute confession. The climax used to be the mad dash to the prison (the telephone wires were always out of order) and the rescue of the condemned just as the executioner was about to throw the electric switch.

Naturally then, a picture-wise being knows full well the outcome of "The Law and the Woman" even while he is in the thick of the situation. The director knew this too—knew that his audience was going to know how his story ended. How then to make them forget that they knew it? How to make them so interested in the happenings on the screen that they were caught up in them and lost sight of the foregone conclusion altogether? The answer: By the judicious use of detail.

This judicious application of detail is to be found

in "The Law and the Woman" as directed by Mr. Stanlaws. The wife is several times about to hear the confession from the lips of the other woman. "It's coming now," you think. But no! Some little detail arises to prevent it. The telephone rings and when the conversation is over the other woman's inclination for confidences has passed. Again the confession is about to come when the other woman (exercising the prerogative of her sex) suddenly changes her mind.

A half dozen other such little details halt that confession, the while the spectator has completely forgotten that he knows the outcome. All he is interested in is that confession.

In the final climax when the desired words are wrenched from the woman's lips detail is again brought admirably into play. The woman's superstitions are preyed upon. She is alone at a table. A door slams. A shade flies up. Her nerves grow ragged. So do yours. Throughout it all the utmost suspense is maintained until finally when the confession comes you breathe the same sigh of wonderful thanks and relief that is breathed by the wife.

For skillful use of detail then, Penrhyn Stanlaws' work in "The Law and the Woman" is commended. And in case I am not giving credit where credit is due, Albert S. LeVino prepared the continuity.

"THE LAW AND THE WOMAN" IS A REMARKABLE ILLUSTRATION OF HOW JUDICIOUSLY APPLIED DETAIL CAN HEIGHTEN A DRAMATIC EFFECT. IT WAS DIRECTED BY PENHRYN STANLAWS

"FORBIDDEN FRUIT" IS AN EXTRAVAGANT, FASCINATING MELODRAMA DIRECTED BY CECIL DE MILLE—A NEW VERSION OF HIS OLD PICTURE, "THE GOLDEN CHANCE," DONE IN HIS SALAD DAYS

CHAPTER XXVI

MARSHALL NEILAN SUMMARIZES

MR. NEILAN, whose moods run the range of human emotions, believes that many directors forget to put themselves in the places of their audiences. —Loss of proper perspective results.—Mr. Neilan also summarizes in such complete fashion that he concludes the argument

Chapter XXVI

It appears after all that Cecil De Mille is the only director in the producing art who doesn't believe in showing his players how to play a scene. Here comes Marshall Neilan with some words on directing and the first thing he says is: "One of the most potent assets of the director is his own ability to act. It is a difficult matter to tell a person how to do certain things if one doesn't know how to do it one's self. It is a simple matter to stop an actor in his work and tell him he isn't doing it right, but it is another matter entirely to get out on the set and show him the error of his ways before the camera. Therefore, a director's ability to act is a first asset."

This, coming on top of the De Mille formula is disconcerting. Disconcerting because both Mr. De Mille and Mr. Neilan manage to get the utmost from their players. And they go about it in entirely different ways it would seem. As a result neither one of them can be wrong and they both must be right. A cold can be cured by repeated swallows of hot scotch but others prefer to stuff themselves full of quinine and let it go at that. The cold is done away with in both cases. Hence good performances are seen in both Neilan and De Mille pictures.

Mr. Neilan elaborates further on the subject thus: "By the same token it is more or less impossible to correct the portrayal of a certain piece of business if you haven't the ability to demonstrate just how it should

be corrected. In practically every scene that a director takes he is obliged first to get out on the set and show an actor or an actress how to perform a bit of business or how to register an expression. So, naturally a director must be able to act. He may be a bad actor or a good one but as long as he is able to show what he wants done and how he wants it done his work is going to be much easier.

"This is specially true in the handling of children on the screen. Children, talented or not, are not possessed of years of actual stage or screen experience which is necessary to give a performer the proper finesse and polish in actual screen work. The director with the ability to act can get out before the camera and go through the child's part for him, incorporating in it the polish that he desires the child to put into it. If the child is a good mimic the rest is easy. And I am not afraid that in mimicking me the child is going to give a mechanical performance."

Mr. Neilan knows whereof he speaks when it comes to handling children. Two of his best pictures, "Penrod" and "Dinty" were stories with a boy actor, Wesley Barry, playing the principal role. In fact, it is due to Mr. Neilan's tutelage that young Barry has reached his present state of popularity. He has come under other directors besides Mr. Neilan but the teachings he received from the creator of his two best pictures still remain.

Continuing on the same theme Mr. Neilan says: "The merit of an actor's performance depends in ratio on the director's ability to show him what he wants.

This accounts for the reason that certain actors and actresses receive flattering praise for their performances under one director while under the next director they may fail miserably. Any number of such instances could be cited but I have lots of friends among the actors and actresses and I don't want to turn them into enemies over night."

I do not altogether subscribe to this statement of Mr. Neilan's. It is quite true that players have gained fame under one director and then worked with another and fallen down on the job. In fact one producing company recently elevated a certain actress to stardom because of her excellent work in one of its big pictures. But as soon as she left the guidance of the director who made this picture her ability seemed to take wings and leave her in the lurch.

But blaming these sudden transitions from good to bad on the directors ability to show an actor how to work, and the next fellow's refusal or inability to show him how is not, to my way of thinking, exactly right. It may have something to do with it but after all if a director shows all his players how he wants a scene done, the result, as Mr. De Mille pointed out, would eventually result in the entire cast giving mechanical imitations of the director in a protean act. An actor does better work for certain directors, included among which is Mr. Neilan, because for such directors he has respect, he believes in their ability, they retain his confidence. Then too Mr. Neilan and the others inspire an actor to his greatest efforts. The enthusiasm of the artistic director is communicated to the actor. If he

is any sort of an actor he simply can't go wrong when working under the direction of a truly artistic director such as Mr. Neilan.

"The dramatic sense—the sense of dramatic construction" continues Mr. Neilan, "is another highly important asset of the motion picture director. This remark is, of course, somewhat obvious but in my opinion there are too many so-called directors who turn out machine-made pictures and the chief reason that they are machine-made is because their makers don't know the least thing about construction. Half of them wouldn't know a dramatic situation if it was thrust under their various noses.

"It doesn't make any difference whether this dramatic sense is a result of years of study of the drama or whether it is just a subconscious sixth sense thrown in along with the other five. It's the same in other branches of work, creative or otherwise. Some men become great generals through long years of study and application to the science of war. Another man just steps in and is able to converse with them on even terms because he is an instinctive general. In the motion picture producing art every director who has created a position for himself has either acquired the dramatic sense through years of study or else has it ingrained in him so deeply that he couldn't lose it even if his job were cleaning streets.

"There are many of our directors in the latter class. Fellows born with the dramatic sense. The art of picture producing has recruited so many young men that perhaps the majority of them must needs be put in

this class. In the year to come I sincerely believe that the study of the creation of motion pictures will be taught as an art or craft just as playmaking is today. In fact, the scenario classes in many of the universities now are paving the way for the broader classes to come. Most of the dramatic scholars in the picture art have been recruited from the stage. These are the men who have the traditions and the teachings of drama at their finger tips.

"Where does this sense help? A plain instance is the director's ability or inability to know when a situation is handled correctly in a story. His dramatic sense will answer the question for him. If the situation is treated falsely he will know how to change it—he will instantly detect the fault and eliminate it."

Here Mr. Neilan takes up the same line of thought that I endeavored to set down in the second chapter of this book. The power of visualization, which enables a director to detect the right from the wrong, is the second most important asset of the motion picture director. Without it he is totally at a loss. This dramatic sense, or rather this dramatic-picture sense is really nothing less than the power of visualization. The two things work to the same end and, call it what you will, no man can ever hope to be a director and live to be recognized as such without the power of visualization or, according to Mr. Neilan, the sixth sense.

"Perhaps I should place ahead of these two requisites," Mr. Neilan goes on to say, "the ability of the director to put himself in the place of his audience—to view his work through not only neutral but critical eyes.

First it is necessary to keep within the understanding of the average photoplay audience. And, don't forget, that it has been discovered that the age of the average picture audience is startlingly low—somewhere in the 'teens'. If we present things on the screen that are five years ahead of an audience we aren't the right kind of creators. It is just as bad to do this as to present something five years behind the times.

"Like all directors I know there is room for improvement in screen work. The art is young yet and has got to advance slowly, mainly because its tremendous and cosmopolitan following will only advance slowly. The motion picture can't afford to go too far ahead of its audience. It can keep a few paces ahead and encourage its audiences to come up those few paces but it can't go too far afield.

"This matter of a director viewing his work from the vantage point of the audience has a more practical application as well. The director must retain his perspective on his picture—must retain, that is, his first fresh perspective. So many directors become so satiated in their work that they lose the value of their pictures. They have gone over their stories in every scene from the scenario all through the process of directing and in the cutting room where they are confronted with the difficult task of bringing their pictures down to the required length they are inclined to cut out valuable story material. They know their stories so well that they forget an audience only sees them once, that an audience as a rule is in total ignorance of the story until it begins on the screen. There-

fore every point of value in the story must be retained. And to accomplish this the director must jump outside himself and view his picture from the standpoint of the layman every time that he has anything to do with it.

"This loss of perspective is one of the reasons why we have "jumpy" pictures and pictures that seem lacking in continuity."

Mr. Neilan concludes the subject with these words: "Above all, I consider that the director's appreciation of the human side of life is his greatest asset. Unless a director is thoroughly human down to the very earth and appreciative of the things in life that are common to the ordinary mortal he can not hope to attain any degree of success. If he himself has suffered, if he is a close student of human nature and can reflect the the human things on the screen then he automatically becomes a successful director—I might almost say a true artist."

Mr. Neilan hasn't bothered to list his own abilities which are manifold. His moods run the range of human emotions. He can transport an audience with the quiet beauty and sincere pathos of his work as he did in the best Mary Pickford picture ever made, "Stella Maris," or he can become positively Goldbergian in his creations and rival Mack Sennett as he did in "Dinty."

Mr. Neilan is his own best answer to all the arguments he has set forth here.

I had intended to attach a summary to this book, listing the requirements of the successful director but on beginning the task I find that I would be merely duplicating Mr. Neilan's words. He has compiled the summary.

MARSHALL NEILAN

MARSHALL NEILAN (SEATED) DIRECTING WESLEY BARRY IN A SCENE FOR "PENROD"

CHAPTER XXVII

"BEST DIRECTED" PICTURES

A LIST of contemporary pictures in each one of which the art of the director has been best displayed

Chapter XXVII

I am not going to try, in conclusion, to list the best directed pictures made during the life of the picture producing art. Such a list would necessarily be overlong while those that we considered masterpieces three years ago are inferior when matched beside the worthy productions of today. The only picture that seems to have lived is "The Birth of a Nation." This first pretentious work of D. W. Griffith will naturally rank high in any list of "best pictures." So, too, do some of the earlier Chaplin pictures which have been reissued many times under different titles.

The list of best directed pictures appended therefore does not belong particularly to one period of producing activity. It does contain, however, pictures that will be as good five years from the moment of writing as they were when first shown on the screens of the picture theatres. Time dims the quality of the great rank and file of pictures but it will have a difficult time rubbing the polish from these. Doubtless many others should be included. There are the delightful comedies of Constance Talmadge, the more serious works of Norma Talmadge, numbers of Mary Pickford pictures and numbers of Douglas Fairbanks pictures that will perhaps live longer than those included here. William S. Hart has immortalized himself forever yet recent pictures of his fail to react in as powerful a manner as his earlier work.

Furthermore, there have been some exceedingly pop-

ular pictures that have been very badly directed. No effort has been made to include these. And no effort has been made to include minor pictures quite well directed.

All points in the matter of direction have been considered. Minor faults have been glossed over when the merits have swung the scales overwhelmingly in their direction.

The list, finally, is not to be taken as anything more than contemporary.

"Shoulder Arms" and "The Kid," directed by Charles Chaplin. Because, in addition to being the best comedies produced, they show a marvelous insight into human nature and because the dividing line between their comedy and the tragedies that might result from the same situations, is but the width of a hair.

"Way Down East," directed by D. W. Griffith. Because here is a masterly handled picturization of a famous old melodrama. Because the rough edges have been smoothed over by the master hand of the director and because it closes in the biggest thrill ever presented on the screen.

"Orphans of the Storm," directed by D. W. Griffith. Because here is a masterly handled picturization of a famous old melodrama, etc.

"Miss Lulu Bett" and "Midsummer Madness," directed by William C. De Mille. Because both pictures, dealing with classes of people remotely removed from one another, contain a penetrating and true study of character and because these characters have been welded together in both instances in potent, dramatic pictures.

"The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and "The Conquering Power," directed by Rex Ingram. Because tragedy and spectacle has been handled in the one, and tragedy in the other, with the discriminating eye of an artist. Because each presents its director as able in creating an illusion on the screen so complete as to dissolve the theatre walls into a part of the picture itself.

"The Three Musketeers," directed by Fred Niblo. Because it is the best of Douglas Fairbanks' many best. Because it displays the fact that its director knows how to apply modern technique to a classic and still preserve the worth of the classic.

"Disraeli," directed by Henry Kolker. Because it is the best screen version of a celebrated play ever produced.

"The City of Silent Men," directed by Tom Forman. Because it raises a crook melodrama to the level of high art.

"Humoresque," directed by Frank Borzage. Because it is the most faithful presentation of racial traits and characteristics filmed. Because its director reveals in it his uncanny power of developing a screen character until you can almost hear it speak.

"Sentimental Tommy," directed by John Robertson. Because a rare and beautiful story has been transferred to the screen without harm or loss and because in it its director gave one of the most eloquent answers ever given to those who claim there are no artists in the art of picture producting.

"Peter Ibbetson," directed by George Fitzmaurice.

Because a rare and beautiful story has been transferred to the screen without harm or loss and because in it its director gave one of the most eloquent answers ever given to those who claim there are no artists in the art of picture producing.

"Stella Maris," directed by Marshall Neilan. Because it is the best picture in which Mary Pickford has ever appeared.

"Little Lord Fauntleroy," directed by Al Green and Jack Pickford. Because something approaching an artistic achievement has been made from this ancient too-sentimental work.

"The Indian Tomb," directed by Joe May. Because, with the exception of humor, it blends every motion pictorial element in a whole so absorbing that time means nothing.

"Tol'ble David," directed by Henry King. Because the spirit of the original work, a work of literary merit, has been skillfully communicated to the screen.

"The Law and the Woman," directed by Penrhyn Stanlaws. Because an old plot has been translated into terms of intense melodrama through the judicious use of detail.

"Scratch My Back," directed by Sidney Olcott. Because it is an original, ingenious comedy done in excellent taste.

"Over the Hill," directed by Harry Millarde. Because it is a sentimental tear-jerker done in the most highly skilled fashion.

"Forbidden Fruit," directed by Cecil B. De Mille.

Because it represents its director at his exotic, most extravagant best.

"Passion," directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Because it displays the art of handling big masses of people colorfully and because with its spectacular scenes there is a blending of an absorbing personal story.

"Dinty," directed by Marshall Neilan. Because it is one of the most captivating, rollicking and delightfully foolish things ever done on the screen.

"Doubling for Romeo," directed by Clarence Badger. Because it is one of the most captivating, rollicking and delightfully foolish things ever done on the screen.

"The Silent Call," directed by Laurence Trimble. Because it is the best melodramatic novelty of the year.

"The Miracle Man," directed by the late George Loane Tucker. Because—well, just because.

"The Loves of Pharaoh," directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Because it is the best work of this director. Because in it he more nearly actually reaches his publicity pedestal than in any other of his pictures.

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